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*The Balkans and the Byzantine World before and after the Captures of Constantinople, 1204 and 1453*, edited by Vlada Stanković.

**The Balkans and  
Byzantine World before  
and after the Captures  
of Constantinople,  
1204 and 1453**

Edited by Vlada Stanković

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Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

When Isaac ascended the throne in September 1185 he was immediately faced with the Norman invasion of the Balkans; Dyrrachion and Thessalonike had already fallen and the Norman forces were marching unopposed towards Constantinople. The new emperor launched a massive counter-offensive which succeeded in swiftly expelling the invaders and subsequently negotiated an important alliance (or rather a renewal of the pre-existing alliance) with the Hungarians whereby he married the daughter of King Béla III, Margaret, and restored the *status quo ante* in the western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> The agreement not only secured peace in the empire's northwestern frontier, putting an end to Hungarian encroachment, but also resolved the question of Serbia, to which Béla formally renounced all claims.<sup>10</sup> The marriage, however, produced an unexpected result. Isaac had intended that the royal wedding be paid from the imperial estates, but demands were also made on Anchialos and other neighboring towns, provoking the local inhabitants to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when the emperor refused to enlist the local Vlach leaders, the brothers Theodore and Asen, in the imperial forces and grant them an estate producing a small income in the vicinity of the Haimos Mountains.<sup>12</sup> The two brothers enlisted the support of St. Demetrios to their cause in order to mobilize their compatriots and launched a full-scale rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Without opposition they extended their control over the regions outside the Haimos Mountains. Theodore assumed the name Peter, after Peter I who had ruled Bulgaria in the tenth century, and was crowned tsar. Having failed to capture Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, the rebels commenced their devastating raids.<sup>14</sup> Isaac responded with a series of counter-offensives in the following decade, but achieved limited success. The fighting seems to have mainly taken place in the regions extending from Sofia and Lovitzos (Loveč) to the west, to Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea in the east, and as far as Arkadiopolis in Thrace to the south.<sup>15</sup>

The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas



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to territorial concessions, the emperor is said to have recognized Nemanja's entitlement to a substantial portion of the territories he had conquered in the previous decade but the Serbian ruler was forced to return the vital lands along the Morava, notably Niš and its surrounding area, and those in the region of the upper Vardar, including Skopje. He also had to relinquish part of the Kosovo-Metohija area, including Prizren and Polog.<sup>55</sup>

Following his victory over the Serbs, Isaac met with his father-in-law, Béla of Hungary. In an oration delivered probably in 1192, Choniates speaks of two separate meetings: the Hungarian king first traveled south to meet the emperor in an unknown location but presumably within imperial territory. Béla is said to have honored the emperor with gifts and made obeisance to him. The Hungarian king is also said to have praised the imperial victory—despite the fact that he had done nothing to encourage it—and deriving great benefit for his own domains, he heralded the emperor's deeds throughout his land of the Hungarians in order to prepare the emperor's visit. Isaac then marched north to the Sava River for the second meeting, which probably took place at Sirmium. This was an impressively staged encounter with the emperor arriving by ship to a ceremonial reception at which Béla and the Hungarian elite were all present. Here, always according to Choniates, the subordinate status of Hungary was demonstrated in a most spectacular manner: "Thus the Istros was traversed without battle, the Hungarians bent their knees without recourse to arms and killing, and greeted the emperor of the Romans as their despot."<sup>56</sup> Choniates's description, despite its rhetorical flourish and propagandistic intent, suggests that these meetings were primarily intended to reaffirm the Byzantine position in the region of the western Balkans (especially with regard to Serbia) and ensure the alliance and loyalty of the Hungarians.<sup>57</sup>

The arrangements with the Serbs and the Hungarians were not to be taken lightly. When Béla invaded Serbia most probably at the end of 1192/beginning of 1193, Isaac threatened to send reinforcements to the Serbs and appealed to Pope Celestine III (1191–8) to force the Hungarians to withdraw, thus defending Byzantine rights over the Serbian territories.<sup>58</sup> Following the defeat of the Byzantine forces at Arkadiopolis (1194), a location dangerously close to Constantinople, Béla, acting as an ally of the emperor, agreed to attack the Vlach–Bulgarians from the north in conjunction with a Byzantine attack from the south, but the planned campaign was aborted when Isaac was deposed while encamped at Kypsella.<sup>59</sup> Although Isaac had relinquished control of territories to the Hungarians and the Serbs in the western Balkans, his policy of a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in this area can only be described as pragmatic under the circumstances. In any case, the lands that reverted to the Hungarian crown had only come under Byzantine control in recent decades and only after a series of hard-fought wars (1162–7). Likewise,

the separatist tendencies of the Serbs had to be repeatedly restrained by force in the not so distant past (1162, 1168, and 1172) and Isaac was able to secure their submission and also to retain the Byzantine position west of the Morava, and especially along the military road from Belgrade (through Niš, Sofia, Philippopolis, Adrianople) to Constantinople, and in southern Macedonia. What is more, the emperor's marriage diplomacy tied both Hungary and Serbia to the Byzantine Empire; the former through alliance and the latter through acquiescence. It is true that the Byzantine defeat at Arkadiopolis marks the penetration of the Vlach–Bulgarians rebels into southern Thrace, but Isaac was quick to recognize the danger and planned a massive counter-offensive, which, as we have seen, was never realized.

The situation in the northern Balkans becomes somewhat confused during the reign of Isaac's successor, Alexios III. It is immediately noticeable that the geography of the struggle during this period was transferred from the regions of the Haimos Mountains and central Thrace to the Rhodope Mountains, eastern and central Macedonia, and southern Thrace. This has been taken to mean that the former areas had now effectively slipped from imperial control.<sup>60</sup> Yet the extent of Vlach–Bulgarian occupation during this period remains uncertain. The major cities and outposts in the former regions remained in Byzantine hands, including Philippopolis and Beroe in central Thrace, and the ports of Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea coast.<sup>61</sup> In this context, it is significant to note that Choniates repeatedly refers to incursions, plundering, and ravaging rather than conquest and occupation. His narrative also makes clear the fact that in the cases where the rebels attempted to occupy cities and fortresses, they were generally unsuccessful. For example, in c. 1190 the Vlach–Bulgarians sacked Anchialos, took Varna, razed Sardica, and plundered Stoumbion and Niš. But Isaac's commanders swiftly recovered Varna and Anchialos, strengthening the fortifications of the latter and installing a garrison within.<sup>62</sup> In c. 1193 the rebels set out to attack Philippopolis, Sofia, and Adrianople; though they devastated the lands en route, they failed to capture these cities.<sup>63</sup> What is more, the so-called "Bulgarian Imitative" coins, identified as such on the basis of hoards deposited in the region of the Thracian Plain and the Strymon Valley between c. 1195 and c. 1210 and taken as evidence that the Vlach–Bulgarians had begun striking their own coins, are no longer considered to have been of Bulgarian provenance since these "faithful imitations" of Byzantine originals circulated in all the regions of the empire between c. 1195 and c. 1250.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, we need to consider that Alexios III fought less against the Vlach–Bulgarians, who from 1197 were led by the formidable Kalojan (Ioannitsa), and more against the rebellious Vlach commanders employed in his service.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, his first act as emperor was to dismiss the army amassed by his predecessor to fight against the Vlach–Bulgarians and to sue for peace. Since the

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rather unfavorable situation, and was going through one of its biggest crises in its long history. It was the time when the Byzantine state was devastated by disturbances and turmoil, the events that usually herald the great historical changes and major disasters. Many internal turmoil and contradictions that had existed in the previous decades as well, although always hidden under the seemingly calm surface—at least hidden from the later historians with their limited view dependent on the available sources—appeared in their full scope and severity in the year 1204. Together with external pressure, these internal Byzantine tensions destroyed the Empire that had served as the model for political order and state stability and brought about total chaos and disorganization.<sup>4</sup>

Viewed in that light, the last years of the rule of Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180) were in a way the period of calm before the storm, but the calm that accentuated the differences in the Byzantine society and created the environment favorable to strengthening of disintegrative forces in the Empire.<sup>5</sup> The apparent difference between the might of the Byzantine Empire that Manuel I Komnenos almost established in the glory of the old times, on the one hand, and the rapid decline and obvious powerlessness of the central government during the rule of his ancestors, on the other, prompted scholars to consider the death of the emperor in September 1180 as one of the turning points in Byzantine history: the end of a brilliant age and the beginning of great temptations for the Empire.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note that already among the contemporaries of the emperor the opinion prevailed that the death of Manuel I was significant as the turning point after which many misfortunes befell the Byzantine Empire. Eustathius, the metropolitan of Thessalonica, wrote at the end of the twelfth century with depression and bitterness of a prophet: "It seems that it was to be our fate, as it pleased God, that with the fall of the emperor Manuel Komnenos there collapsed at the same time everything that was firm among the Greeks, and that when like the sun he left us, a great darkness descended upon us."<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that these words resound as overly pathetic and are full of the standard oratory exaggeration, the metropolitan of Thessalonica made a very profound observation of the existing circumstances, expressing the view of many contemporaries.<sup>8</sup> It is important to stress that the metropolitan of Thessalonica did not live to witness the Fourth Crusade and the Latin seizing of Constantinople—this great scholar and important church leader passed away in 1195/1196.<sup>9</sup> Eustathius's judgment that Manuel's death represented a turning point in the history of the Empire was therefore not a consequence of his hindsight, which adds a specific weight to his statement.

Modern scholars who are specialists in the twelfth-century Byzantium are inclined to claim that the internal strength of the Komnenian dynasty, the energetic diplomacy and the wars of the three emperors—Alexios I

(1081–1118), John II (1118–1143), and Manuel I (1143–1180)—stabilized the borders of the Empire so that the Empire's strength at the moment of Manuel's death seemed quite impressive.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the argument can be put forward that the structure of the Byzantine Empire began to dissolve much before the participants of the Fourth Crusade reached Constantinople. It will suffice to mention just a few facts: first and foremost, the "secession" of Bulgaria and Serbia starting from the mid-1180s; the rise of the independent lords in Cyprus, Peloponnese, and western Anatolia, also beginning in the 1180s; the founding of the Empire of Trebizond in Pontus, in April 1204. It is true, however, that this initial phase of disintegration was limited to the periphery of the Empire. The main thrust toward disintegration was executed by the Crusaders, both by the capture of Constantinople and their military conquests of Byzantine provinces that came about in the following years. These events dismembered the Byzantine Empire in its very core.<sup>11</sup>

We should also not fail to notice that the newly formed Bulgarian state (in 1185/1186), founded by the brothers Peter and Asen, rose abruptly in a very short time and slowly but steadily even became a rival to Byzantium in the struggle for dominance over southeastern Europe. The ambitions of the young Bulgarian state became evident in the 1190s, with many clashes along the Byzantine-Bulgarian borders, initiated mainly by the Bulgarians.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, these were the formative years for the other South Slavic neighbor of the Byzantine Empire—Serbia. The Byzantine victory over the Serbs at the Morava River probably in the late fall of 1190 could in certain sense be also called the Pyrrhic victory. It is a dominant opinion in the scholarship—although not unchallenged—that the events that followed the battle on the Morava, the marriage of Serbian prince Stephen Nemanjić with the Byzantine princess Eudocia, Angelina and Stephen's receiving the title of *sebastokrator* represented a recognition of Serbia's independence by Byzantium. Be that as it may, the position of Stephen, who became the ruler of Serbia in 1196, changed significantly, since as *sebastokrator* and the imperial son-in-law he was given a certain distinguished position within the Byzantine state hierarchy.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of Bulgaria and Serbia, combined with the conquests of the Hungarian king Béla III (1172–1196) that banished the Byzantines forever from the Danube,<sup>14</sup> the conquests by the Sultan of Rum in Asia Minor,<sup>15</sup> as well as with the disobedience by the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia,<sup>16</sup> thus inflicted significant losses to the Byzantine Empire, in both geopolitical and ideological sense, even before the Crusaders' capture of Constantinople in 1204.

In order to correctly understand the nature of the seeming contradiction pervading the Empire on the eve of 1204, the coexistence of the centripetal and centrifugal factors,<sup>17</sup> a note on methodology is in order: we are not talking about the artificial difference between the centralized Byzantine state



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Other aristocrats may have found shelter in Athonite monasteries, where they had donated lands during the previous years; the monastic community's submission to the Ottomans in 1423, in the presence of the former Despot Andronikos Palaiologos himself, was certainly a favorable circumstance for them to manage the estates they had donated, since the Ottomans were already masters of Chalkidike by then. The Iakovos Tarchaneiotes mentioned above could be one of them. As has been often remarked in similar cases, withdrawing to Ottoman Athos meant that the person in question could obtain the status of subject of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>27</sup> This offered greater freedom to exercise at least some control over family estates and their revenues—a resident of Venetian Thessalonike would certainly have been denied such an opportunity.

The latter pattern—that of refuge to Athos—is illustrated in the traces of aristocratic patronage that can be detected on Athos and this patronage can often be attributed to Thessalonican factors. The best example is the monastery of Vatopedi: According to an inscription on the door lintel above the entrance to the outer narthex of the main church, the Middle Byzantine marble lintel was repaired in 1426.<sup>28</sup> It is possible that the repair in question was related to the installation of the bronze doors still in place today (figure 4.1). According to a tradition, these doors were transported to Athos from the church of Saint Sophia in Thessalonike: Although this cannot be proved, close inspection of the doors reveals that they are made up of several plaques that were evidently removed from their original position in another church and reassembled at Vatopedi—hence the resulting inconsistencies in the rendering of the decorative patterns.<sup>29</sup> The most plausible attribution would be a Palaiologan church (as indicated by the double-headed eagles depicted) and nearby Thessalonike is a very possible place of origin—thus the legend seems to echo the facts, at least partially. One year later, in 1427 the belfry of the Vatopedi church was erected, according to another inscription on the belfry's north facade (figure 4.2).<sup>30</sup> All these construction works reflect the availability of funds during the years immediately following the surrender of Thessalonike to the Venetians, as well as the importation of grand-scale items made of metal from the city to the peninsula. These facts agree with the care landowning patrons had taken to endow the monasteries and secure their wealth in the years leading to 1423, as well as with the presence of Andronikos himself in Athos in 1423 and during at least one visit to the Community as early as 1416.<sup>31</sup>

The testimony of icons and liturgical vessels that were transferred from Thessalonike to Athos is equally illuminating. Two late fourteenth-century or early fifteenth-century icons reveted in silver and gold now in Vatopedi were, according to a legend, brought from Saint Sophia in Thessalonike.<sup>32</sup> They are an icon of the Virgin Hodegetria and another one depicting the Hospitality of



Figure 4.1 Mount Athos, Vatopedi Monastery, main church entrance. Source: After *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου* (Mount Athos, 1998), figure 440.

Abraham (figure 4.3). Their style points to the late Palaiologan period and the iconography of the plaques attached to the revetment suggest Thessalonike as their place of origin; their large dimensions show that they must have belonged to the sanctuary barrier of a church. Thus, it is possible that they



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Since the beloved first cousin of the highest king (rex) of Serbia and mine beloved *in-law* [my emphasis], the noblest zhupan Demetrios requested from my imperial highness [. . .].<sup>19</sup>

### 3. TOWARD THE UNION WITH BYZANTINE EMPEROR

For the major part of his life, King Uroš I's second son Milutin—in contemporary sources usually officially named Stephen Uroš II—was on a verge of becoming the Emperor's son-in-law. Born in 1254 when the Latins were still the lords of Constantinople, with the coming of age and soon after he turned fifteen Milutin was betrothed to the daughter of the heroic Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, the conqueror of the New Rome from Crusaders' offspring. But the princess Anna's age—she was at least eight and maybe even ten years younger than Milutin—and then another political earthquake that shook the entire region after Michael VIII's Church Union with Rome in 1274, denied the Serbian prince the opportunity to jump in hierarchy over his brother and other relatives through a direct connection with the Byzantine emperor. Nevertheless, the goal was set in Milutin's mind, and once the opportunity presented itself again he was determined not to allow it to slip away again at any cost.<sup>20</sup>

A quarter of a century after the first marriage accord that promised him not only the status of Michael VIII's son-in-law but carried with it the certainty of inheriting the Serbian royal throne, Milutin found himself at the receiving end of the Byzantine offensive in Macedonia, carried out by the generals of Michael VIII's son and three or four years his junior, Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos. The two of them belonged to two most stable and powerful lines in southeastern Europe; they were both bonded with the wide circle of rulers in the region and beyond, particularly to the ruling families of Bulgaria—where they had confronting interests—Hungary and Mongolian Golden Horde on the northern banks of the Danube; they were both political realists who realized the true strength of their polities and understood the potential advantages of the close political alliance that, as a rule, was most easily achieved through a marriage agreement, as they could both conclude from their own multiple marriages; and, lastly, the earlier connections between the two dynasties were not renewed recently and there was therefore no impediments on account of blood proximity to a new marriage alliance.

The lengthy negotiations, during which the Serbian King's determination for striking an all-encompassing political alliance with Byzantium overcame all obstacles, ended with the ceremony in Thessalonica on 19 April 1299 in which the forty-five-year-old Milutin was wedded to Andronikos II's five-year-old daughter, Simonis. Obviously still remembering the uncertain

character of his first betrothal with another Byzantine princess almost three decades earlier, the Serbian King insisted on a genuine marriage ceremony, forcing the transgression of canonical laws that decreed twelve years as the earliest possible age at which girls can marry. However, there were some important concessions from the Serbian king's side, and by far the most significant one regarded his total and unequivocal "union" with the Empire,<sup>21</sup> as was explicitly stated in the imperial edicts that followed immediately the marriage ceremony, only to be repeated constantly and diligently in the decades to come:

Because the highest King (*kralis*) of Serbia and beloved brother and brother-in-law of my empire, Lord Stephen Uroš came to the union with my empire. . . .

Ἐπεὶ ὁ ὑψηλότατος κράλης Σερβίας καὶ περιτόθητος ἀδελφὸς καὶ γαμβρὸς τῆς βασιλείας μου κύρ Στέφανος ὁ Οὐρεσις ἐλθὼν εἰς ἔνωσιν τῆς βασιλείας μου. . . .<sup>22</sup>

The "union" between the Serbian King Milutin and the Emperor represented the high-point of the Serbian Middle Ages, the point to which two centuries of the rule of the Nemanjić dynasty were leading with a very few political moves in other directions. The importance of the events of 1299, and the King Milutin's definite turn toward Byzantium signifies also the real beginning of the creation of the Serbian empire, as Leonidas Mavromatis had formulated it almost four decades ago. The importance of understanding and correctly reconstructing historical context is exemplified in the change of policy and activities of the same King Milutin after he acquired the status of imperial son-in-law: Although King Milutin is renowned for his intensive church building and church restoring program, he did not commence with these ideologically laden activities before he became the emperor Andronikos II's son-in-law. It was only after the alliance with the Byzantine emperor was established, and after Milutin had made the final choice and turn toward Byzantium, that he embarked on almost imperial *renovatio* of the holy places, situated in the former, or even traditional Byzantine lands.

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Assessing the position of Serbia within the broader Byzantine world by using the notions such as "independence" or understanding the status of Serbian polity as "independent" in the highly personalized and intensively interconnected world of southeastern Europe is highly misleading. Instead of separating Serbia—or any other polity in this region for that matter—from the broader historical contexts and its natural historical surroundings, it would be much more correct and rewarding to analyze the structure and mechanisms of



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## Chapter 10

# Mount Athos and the Byzantine-Slavic Tradition in Wallachia and Moldavia after the Fall of Constantinople

Radu G. Păun

It has been observed that Wallachian and Moldavian relations with Mount Athos first started in the context of rapidly declining Byzantine imperial power and growing Ottoman influence in European politics.<sup>1</sup> The Southern Slavic Orthodox states, faced with Turkish incursions and conquest, were constrained by divergent interests, at a time when the principalities north of the Danube were just beginning to enter the political and cultural orbit of the Byzantine Commonwealth.

It was in this context that the first Wallachian contacts were established with Mount Athos, known in the sources as "the Theotokos' Garden on Earth." The *protos* Chariton proposed to the Princes Nicolae Alexandru (1352–1364) and Vladislav-Vlaicu (1364–1377) that they become new *ktetors* of the "holy and imperial" monastery of Koutloumousiou, thereby inviting them to join the Orthodox "family of rulers" led by the Byzantine *basileus*.<sup>2</sup> Vladislav-Vlaicu duly understood that "it would be wise for My Majesty to do this in turn, as the other rulers, namely Bulgarians, Serbs, Russians and Georgians, have already done" for the salvation of their souls and to honor "the marvellous and Holy Mountain, the holy place which is the eye of the whole Universe" (τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ ὡς εἶπεν ἅπασης τῆς οἰκουμένης).<sup>3</sup>

The following decades brought dramatic changes to the map of the region. The fall of the last Bulgarian kingdom at the close of the fourteenth century was followed, some sixty years later, by the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and of the Serbian despotate, leaving the Danubian principalities in a unique situation as the only free Orthodox states left in South-East Europe. On the other hand, these events put an end to the policy of political and matrimonial alliance in the Orthodox world, which both dynasties, the Wallachian one in particular, had followed since the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup>



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In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

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prominently. Reviewing the numerous donations with which Neagoe showed the Athonite houses, the author of the chronicle realizes that his list can only be partial and adds: "Why pile word upon word to mention all the monasteries in turn? Enough is to say that he enriched all the monasteries of the Holy Mountain of Athos with money and altar plate. He also donated animals, and paid for building works. Thus he became the *ktetor* of the entire Holy Mountain."<sup>31</sup> We find the same observations regarding his gifts to other holy places in the Ottoman Empire: "What shall we say of all the monasteries in turn to which he donated? Enough to say that he made gifts to all those that are in Europe [in the Byzantine sense], Thracia, Hellada, Achaia, Illyricum, Campania, Hellespont, Moesia, Lugdunia, Paphlagonia, Dalmatia, and everywhere, from East to West and from South to North."<sup>32</sup> Thus Neagoe is portrayed as a benefactor of the whole Orthodox *oikoumene*, both Southern Slav and Greek-speaking regions, from the Balkans to Mount Sinai and as far as "the holy city of Jerusalem, Sion which is the mother of the Church." His devotion and generosity are universal, as is divine grace: "So he was like a loving father for everyone, just like the Heavenly Lord, who ordains that His sun should shine and (sends) the rain over the just and the unjust alike, as the Holy Gospel shows."<sup>33</sup> A worthy successor to the Byzantine emperors, as indeed some modern historians also describe him.<sup>34</sup>

Such abundant detail is cause for surprise if we compare the facts that the same chronicle furnishes about Neagoe's predecessors, whose reigns are dealt with in just a few lines. The depth of detail becomes easy to understand however once we know that the only source for this part of the chronicle was the Greek *Life of Saint Niphon* (BHG 1373a) written by Gabriel, *protos* of Holy Mountain, some time after 1517, presumably at the instigation of the prince himself and his allies, the very influential Craiovescu family, who controlled Wallachian political life almost completely during these years.<sup>35</sup> Thus the *Life of Niphon*, in this redaction, is not just a hagiography of the saint but also of Neagoe, who under Gabriel's pen embodies the ideal ruler, in marked contrast with some of his predecessors and in particular Radu the Great (cel Mare, 1495–1508). In fact the whole work centers on the conflict between Niphon, whom Radu had invited to Wallachia to reform the local church, and the prince himself, who could not tolerate a higher authority than his own. Unable to accept secular interference in what he considered spiritual matters, Niphon was forced to leave the country, although not before unleashing upon the prince, his family, and all the land a terrible curse that was not slow in taking effect. Indeed, Prince Radu and his successors Vlad the Younger (cel Tânăr, 1510–1512) and Mihnea "the Bad" (cel Rău, 1508–1509), all from rival dynastic lines to that of Neagoe, died under this curse. Thus Neagoe came to power as an instrument of the divine will, named as such by Saint Niphon, who would go on to become spiritual father to the prince himself

and to the whole Craiovescu clan. As Neagoe was in fact an usurper and also largely responsible for the tragic death of Vlad the Younger, the chronicle's efforts to legitimize his reign understandably go hand in hand with denigration of his rivals for the throne and their families, who in this scheme of things become veritable prototypes of misrule and treachery.<sup>36</sup>

The original text of the *Life of Niphon* as written by Gabriel the *protos* either has not been preserved, or is still undiscovered.<sup>37</sup> However, another text has been found, a short *Vita* composed around 1514/16 by Justin Dekadyos for the use of the monks at Dionysiou, where the saint's relics are kept.<sup>38</sup> Here matters are quite different. Not only Neagoe's role is limited to the translation of the saint's relics to Wallachia, but there is no mention of any conflict between Radu the Great and Niphon, who did not leave Wallachia hounded by the prince and hurling anathema upon him and his family, but rather laden with gifts and money with which to repair his home monastery of Dionysiou.

Dekadyos's work has had no impact at all upon Romanian historical tradition and historiography,<sup>39</sup> which took Gabriel's *Life of Niphon* as the definitive source. This work was translated into Romanian and modified in parts, then incorporated into the *Cronica Cantacuzinilor*. Although scholars cannot agree exactly when this happened,<sup>40</sup> it must however have been sometime in the latter seventeenth century, most probably after 1658–1660.<sup>41</sup> The chronicle was compiled by a redactor associated with the Cantacuzino family, who traced their descent from Neagoe Basarab and strove to emulate his deeds. Like Neagoe in his own time, the Cantacuzino lords needed local legitimation for their high position and the claims to the throne, which they were not slow in pressing.<sup>42</sup> In this context, it is easy to understand why the memory of rival dynastic lines with better claims to the throne was simply expunged from their *Cronica*, while Neagoe's reign and deeds were exalted.<sup>43</sup> Thus Neagoe became known as the protector *par excellence* of the entire Mount Athos and the founder of a glorious tradition as donor and *ktetor* of all Orthodox, a tradition which other "Basarab" princes were to continue to the same or an even greater degree: Matei Basarab (1632–1654), Șerban Cantacuzino (1678–1688), and Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714). Thus the history of one family, written at a late date and with clear political motives, served as substitute for the history of a whole country, from its foundation down to the end of the seventeenth century.

### THE TRADITION—A DISCORDANT VIEW

Yet there is also another history, a "factual" history reconstructed, as far as possible, from several types of sources. This history does not deny Neagoe's work; rather it adds new elements to the picture. In the light of this version,

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The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas



be paid to the monastery, Neagoe specifies that he will respect the amount, which his father Basarab the Younger saw fit to give in his time. We can thereby conclude that Basarab actually originated relations with the Albanian Tower, unsurprising given his other links with Hilandar. In this case, though the practices of family policy and princely institutions differ, they do not contradict one another.<sup>73</sup>

The same would not be the case a century and a half later, when *Cronica Cantacuzinilor* was compiled. By then Vlad the Monk's lineage had died out, while the dynastic branch descended from Neagoe flourished politically once Matei Basarab and his successors fully assumed the (partly real and partly invented) legacy of their forefathers. By now a family tradition had become wholly unified with the institution of rulership, to which no other family in the realm had access. Thus history was rewritten to serve the interests of those who held power; in this history, the figure of Neagoe had to legitimize the present state of affairs, by projecting current concerns back into the past. Furthermore, as in Neagoe's case, the same *Cronica Cantacuzinilor* enumerates more than twenty churches and monasteries that Matei founded or renovated in Wallachia; there are also references to many donations he made in Jerusalem and Mount Athos.<sup>74</sup>

This information is confirmed by other sources,<sup>75</sup> since Neagoe's descendants made a daily practice of emulating exactly those deeds of their illustrious ancestor recorded in the chronicle they themselves had commissioned. The case of Hilandar is very revealing here; almost every "Basarab" prince of the seventeenth century donated some gift to the great Serbian lavra of Athos,<sup>76</sup> and many did the same for Saint Paul.<sup>77</sup> The situation is similar for monasteries and churches in Southern Slavic lands,<sup>78</sup> where the *Cronica Cantacuzinilor* also makes Neagoe Basarab the founder of a tradition.<sup>79</sup> Here too however the actual originators were Vlad the Monk and, in particular, Radu the Great.<sup>80</sup> Needless to say, there is no mention of their donations in the *Cronica Cantacuzinilor*, which exalts instead Neagoe's deeds of charity as presented in the Romanian *Life* of Niphon.

Comparative analysis of the deeds of donation shows that at least in the first phase, alms and charitable gifts to the monasteries of Holy Mountain have a clear family dimension, with the exception of those to Koutloumousiou. The case of donations to Hilandar is relevant here. Thus it is too much to suggest an institutional relationship of patronage between the princes of Wallachia and the monastic community of existed Athos. The Romanian *Life* of Niphon, composed and then incorporated into the *Cronica Cantacuzinilor* in the latter seventeenth century, instrumentalizes the symbolic capital entailed in becoming the *ktetor* for Athonite monasteries. This text on the one hand delegitimizes rival branches of the dynasty, and on the other hand constructs the figure of an ideal monarch in Neagoe Basarab, the prince from whom the

Cantacuzino clan traced their Wallachian descent. In the chronicle's view of the world, Neagoe is the founder of a tradition, patron of all Mount Athos and all religious foundations throughout the Orthodox world. In this case, the status of *ktetor* is institutionally associated with princely rule. At the same time, the princes claiming descent from Neagoe applied exactly the policy that the chronicle attributed to their forefather and illustrated through his several gifts to Mount Athos and in the Southern Slav territories of the Ottoman Empire. In this context, the act of alms-giving and the material costs involved—the donation itself—become more and more identified as a structural feature of princely power, without losing their quality as a gesture within a family tradition. In other words, Neagoe as prince and universal *ktetor*, as he appears in the chronicle, is far more a projection into the past of the realities of the 1650s and 1660s than the portrait of a ruler of the early sixteenth century.

On the other hand, the "invention of tradition," which made the Wallachian princes the protectors *par excellence* of Orthodox holy places subject to the Porte, must be understood in terms of their kinship ties with the princely and noble families of the Southern Slavic realms, especially the Serbs. Here again the case of Neagoe Basarab is the best-known, and thus the most studied.<sup>81</sup> However, it is by no means impossible that Basarab the Younger, Vlad the Monk, and/or Radu the Great may themselves have formed such marriage alliances before Neagoe, which would explain their proven interest in supporting Serbian Orthodoxy.<sup>82</sup> It has been assumed, without concrete evidence, that Radu's second wife, Cătălina, was a daughter of the Montenegrin dynast Jovan Crnojević.<sup>83</sup> Radu's nephew (the son of his sister) Părvu of Băjesti was certainly married to the daughter of the Serbian noble Dmitry Jakšić, in his turn a kinsman to the Branković despots.<sup>84</sup> Thus it was no accident that Radu invited Maxim Branković to Wallachia,<sup>85</sup> who may have arrived there accompanied by his nephew Salomon Crnojević.<sup>86</sup> Whether or not that was the case, we do know from the commemoration books of Hilandar that in the time of Vlad the Monk and his sons there were remarkable social dimensions to relations with the great Serbian monastery, involving most of the Wallachian elite, whose precise relationships with Serbian families still remain to be elucidated.<sup>87</sup> Once again, we find pious and charitable deeds explained through the strength and dynamism of family ties.

#### THE "MOLDAVIAN TRADITION": FACTS AND CONTROVERSIES

Can the same be said of Moldavia? Here, Prince Ștefan the Younger (1517–1527) was married to Stana, a daughter of Neagoe Basarab and Despina-Milica Branković,<sup>88</sup> which explains why his name appears in the



commemoration roll of Krušedol monastery, founded by Maxim Branković. Further family ties between the house of Branković and the Moldavian dynasty came with Petru Rareș' (1527–1538; 1541–1546) marriage to Elena, daughter of the despot Jovan, who lived in exile in Hungary.<sup>89</sup> As well as donations to Hilandar (1533)<sup>90</sup> and possibly Saint Paul,<sup>91</sup> Rareș also offered material support to the monasteries of Sopoćani, Lesnovo, Kratovo, and Krušedol.<sup>92</sup> Petru Rareș's deed of donation to Hilandar in 1533, the first such charter we know of issued by a Moldavian prince, is an interesting document in itself. First, as has been remarked in the scholarship, Rareș declares his intention to increase his support to Hilandar if God should deliver him "from the hands of the pagan peoples" (*отъ руки иноплеменикъ*), whom we may take to be the Ottomans. This statement ties in with his crusading projects,<sup>93</sup> and with his wife's family, the "rightful" protectors of Hilandar.<sup>94</sup> Second, this was notably the first time that a prince of the Wallachian and Moldavian principalities expressed the wish that the Serbian monastery "should from now on be called the monastery of Our Lordship." (*да сѧ зоветь отднѣсь монастырь господства нашего*).<sup>95</sup> As husband of the Despotissa Elena Branković, Rareș now took Hilandar under his protection and thereby understood that he might consider it "his monastery," just as the Moldavian princes considered Zographou theirs, and the Wallachian princes Koutloumousiou.

Rareș's initiative here was continued by his (posthumous) son-in-law Alexandru Lăpușneanul (1552–1561; 1563–1568), known to have granted a series of donations to monasteries on Mount Athos and in Serbia, amongst these a liturgical veil for Mileševa "where our most pious Father Saint Sava of Serbia resides."<sup>96</sup> Scholarship has also remarked on the Serbian origin of some elements of ceremonial at the prince's court, and all of this can likely be traced back to the Serbian retinue of his mother-in-law Elena Branković.<sup>97</sup> Lăpușneanul's name also appears in a memorial roll of the monastery of Hilandar, which proves that the Moldavian princes' "Serbian policy" continued until at least 1550s.<sup>98</sup>

The importance of this latter document is even bigger, as it shifts the discussion of the beginnings of relations between Moldavia and Hilandar back by about a century. Indeed, there it is written that: *въ лѣтѣ 7466 мѣца июля кѣ написасе воєвода молдавскы оу поменикъ и метаніе сътвори да еѣ ктиторъ монастыра сѣго*. This means that the first Moldavian *ktetor* of the great Serbian lavra was in fact Ștefan the Great (cel Mare, 1457–1504), who granted Hilandar a donation on 27th July 1466.<sup>99</sup> This donation certainly was significant enough for the prince and his family (his father Bogdan II, ruler of Moldavia (1449–1451), his mother Maria-Oltea, together with his first wife Eudokia of Kiev, and two of their children, Alexandru and Olena) deserved to be commemorated by the monks. We understand now why Ștefan's name also appears among those of the principal *ktetors* of Hilandar, namely the

Serbian, Bulgarian, and Georgian rulers, along with those of his son Alexandru and one of his wives, Maria. Thus we can postulate that besides the gift he granted on 27th July 1466, Ștefan also made a second donation to Hilandar sometime between September 1472 (when Ștefan married Maria Asanina Palaiologos) and July 1496 (when his son Alexandru died).<sup>100</sup>

Documents in the Hilandar's archives point to an even closer involvement. The names of Ștefan, his son Alexandru, and his wife Maria also feature in the memorial roll of the skete known as the Albanian Tower (*Arbanaški pirg*). A marginal note added later includes one more princess named Maria in the roll of prayers,<sup>101</sup> suggesting that Ștefan donated to this holy place at least twice: once during his marriage to Maria Asanina Palaiologos (September 1472–December 1477) and then again (probably to confirm the preceding grant) while married to his third wife, Maria-Voichița (from summer 1478 to July 1504). In all likelihood, the first grant to the Albanian Tower can be dated to 1472/73, since immediately thereafter he was at war with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>102</sup> The second donation is harder to place. Given that only this one alteration was made to the memorial roll, we might reckon with the period immediately following his marriage to Maria-Voichița, but before the birth of their first son Bogdan-Vlad (16th June 1479) whose name does not appear on the roll; this would place it between summer 1478 and June 1479.

It is certainly risky to venture any interpretations on the basis of such a precariously founded chronology. Nevertheless, we can advance some hypotheses.

First of all, we can remark that the Hilandar memorial roll presents the same structure as two other deeds of donation by Ștefan the Great in exactly this period: one for the Zographou monastery on Athos (10th May 1466),<sup>103</sup> and the other for Probota monastery, where his mother was buried (9th July 1466). In every instance, the family dimension to the donations and corresponding liturgical acts of commemoration is fairly clear. In the chrysobull granted to Probota, Ștefan specifies that the monks should pray for prince Alexandru the Good (his grand-father, 1400–1432), his father Bogdan II and mother Maria-Oltea, himself and his wife Eudokia, along with their children Alexandru and Olena;<sup>104</sup> thus, with the exception of the elder Alexandru, these are exactly the same names as recorded in the memorial roll at Hilandar. Ștefan's parents are not named in the deed of donation to "his monastery" of Zographou, but the monks are asked to put the prince's own name into their memorial roll along with those of his wife Eudokia and their children, "given by God," Alexandru and Olena.<sup>105</sup> Again, the list of names is the same as that at Hilandar.

In all these situations Ștefan showed particular concern for the memory of his immediate ancestors, and for the future of the power consolidated



during nine years of his rule—it is no accident that the donations are given in the names of three (at Probota, even four) generations. The fact that this dynastic manifesto is repeated thrice in almost identical terms is significant in itself, as are the places where the prince chose to proclaim it. The case of Probota, one of the oldest monasteries in Moldavia, is quite clear. In the case of Zographou, many authors have considered the document of 10th May 1466 to have the full force and status of a *typikon*; this may be an exaggeration but, whatever the case may be, the document certainly marks the beginning of Moldavian princely patronage over the great Bulgarian monastery on Athos. We know nothing about the size of Ștefan's grant to Hilandar, but the fact that *the donation was made at the same time as the others* suggests that the prince considered the Serbian lavra just as important a bastion of Orthodoxy as "his monastery" of Zographou, or an outstanding monastery within his own realm. Coincidentally or not, at the very moment Mara Branković was composing her will (21st May 1466),<sup>106</sup> Ștefan appropriated the spiritual legacy of the Southern Slav rulers on the one hand, and on the other hand laid the foundation stone for his own such legacy, the great monastery of Putna (10th July 1466),<sup>107</sup> which was to be the burial place for his family. He also ordered work to begin on compiling the first part of the chronicle of his own reign.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, the past and future of the dynasty and the realm were fused into a present that the prince conceived as tightly bound up with the military projects against the Ottomans.<sup>109</sup>

As for the donations to the Albanian Tower, the first seems to have been made just as preparations were underway for Ștefan's wars against the Porte (1475 and 1476).<sup>110</sup> If this is the case, then here too we see a donation to the Serbian monastery of Athos in the same period as the donations to Zographou.<sup>111</sup> The fact that Ștefan made grants to a monastery founded by the father of the Albanian hero Skanderbeg and under the patronage of Saint George (as is also the case with Zographou), whom the Moldavian prince particularly venerated,<sup>112</sup> further clarifies the crusading dimensions of his wars against the Ottomans. Such gestures must be placed in a larger context yet, marked by a whole series of uncommonly significant events. In 1473, Ștefan married Maria Asanina Palaiologos of the Mangop (Theodosian) dynasty, a scion of the imperial dynasty of that name.<sup>113</sup> At the same time, he effected a rapprochement with Hungary, which sheltered an important Serbian faction including the distinguished families of Branković and Jakšić.<sup>114</sup> This period also saw the first redactions of the chronicle of Moldavia,<sup>115</sup> encompassing the whole history of the realm from its foundation by the voivode Dragoș, whose tomb Ștefan marked with a new stone apparently in the same year 1473.<sup>116</sup> Once again, as in 1466, the concern to perpetuate the memory of his ancestors and to affirm his own dynastic line goes hand in hand with a concern for the Byzantine-Slavic heritage, as illustrated by the prince's order that various

texts be copied out, rightfully considered cornerstones of the ideology of princely authority: the *Tetraevangelia* of Humor, the *Panegyric* of Constantin the Great, and the *Syntagma* of Mathew Blastares (this last being copied from a Serbian version).<sup>117</sup>

In the current state of our knowledge, it would be presumptuous to venture any further on the significance of Ștefan the Great's grants to Hilandar. However, we should mention a further stage in his policy of support to the Athonites, in the final years of his reign. Between 1495 and 1504, as well as granting a series of donations to the monasteries of Zographou and Gregoriou (1497, 1500, 1502), Ștefan also financed construction work at Vatopedi (1495–1496) and Saint Paul (shortly before 1500),<sup>118</sup> and quite likely also aided the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon.<sup>119</sup>

These last facts give cause for reflection.

In the case of his ties to Saint Paul, it is now clear that these followed from an established interest in the Serbian monasteries of Holy Mountain, more than three decades old. Logically enough, after Hilandar, the Serbian lavra *par excellence*, it was next the turn of the Branković family foundation, as the last Serbian despot (a title which had become merely a courtesy), in exile in Hungary, could no longer support it.<sup>120</sup> Given that the Branković family still existed, what else might explain Ștefan's care for Saint Paul, if not kinship ties or some other close relation between the two parties? Furthermore, historians have always invoked such ties to explain donations to this monastery by the Wallachian prince Radu the Great (1499/1500) and by the Wallachian family of the Craiovescu (28th January 1501).<sup>121</sup> How then might we explain Ștefan's action, if not through the same motive? How might we explain why three social actors (or groups of actors) took the same actions, in the same manner and almost at the same moment, if not because all three were similarly connected by the object of their actions?<sup>122</sup>

We have no clear proof of a marriage alliance between Ștefan's family and the Branković or their direct allies. There are however some clues that point in this direction. Thus it is thought that the mother of Ștefan's third wife (Maria-Despina, wife of the Wallachian prince Radu the Handsome [cel Frumos]) was the daughter of the Albanian dynast Gjergj Arianiti Comnen, which would go some way to explaining Ștefan's support for the Albanian Tower.<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, it has also been shown that at least one of the icons formerly held in the church of the Mother of God "of Belgrade" in Constantinople (known as the "Serbian Church") was presented by Prince Ștefan Lăcustă (1538–1540) of Moldavia in 1539.<sup>124</sup> What would the purpose of such a gesture have been unless the prince himself, or a close member of his family, were somehow connected to the Serbian community in the Ottoman capital (very influential at exactly this time)?<sup>125</sup> Thus it is possible that Ștefan Lăcustă's mother, wife, or both may have belonged to this



community. Although nothing is known of Lăcustă's mother's antecedents, it seems that she came from Constantinople. His wife's origins are equally unknown but her name, Kneajna, could indicate she came from the Southern Slavic milieu.<sup>126</sup> Even if historians cannot agree on Ștefan Lăcustă's ancestry and family ties, there seems to me no doubt that he came from the Moldavian ruling family and was either the son or, more likely, the grandson of Ștefan the Great.<sup>127</sup> In the latter case, his patronage of the Serbian Church in Constantinople may perhaps indirectly testify to some family tie between Ștefan the Great himself and the Serbian world, and the donations to Saint Paul in the latter part of Ștefan's reign might have been motivated by some such matrimonial alliance.<sup>128</sup> If this was the case, then the list of Moldavian princes who supported Serbian Orthodoxy grows longer; it begins with Ștefan the Great in 1466, continues with his grandsons Ștefan the Younger and Ștefan Lăcustă, and culminates in the reigns of Petru Rareș and Alexandru Lăpușneanul, respectively Ștefan the Great's son and grandson.<sup>129</sup>

Whatever the case may be, it must be noted that in exactly the same period, 1495–1504, the Wallachian Prince Radu the Great made several grants of income to precisely these monasteries of Vatopedi, Saint Paul, and Saint Panteleimon, which thus seem to have stood under a double patronage, both Moldavian and Wallachian. Furthermore, Radu's name also appears in the memorial roll of the Albanian Tower. Are these facts mere matters of happenstance, or do they rather suggest more than simple coincidence?

The first point we must emphasize is that the charity of Moldavian and Wallachian princes toward a *chosen few* Athonite monasteries began just thirteen years after the extinction of the Christian Byzantine Empire, with Ștefan the Great's donations to Zographou and Hilandar. In the second phase, more monasteries received donations from Ștefan, but also from the Wallachian Princes Vlad the Monk and Radu the Great. Given that some monasteries thus benefited from donations from both realms at much the same time, it seems quite clear that *we cannot talk of any kind of sole patronage over all Mount Athos* as has sometimes been argued, but must rather refer to individual acts of devotion, motivated by particular considerations and ideological stakes that must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

On the other hand, we cannot rule out that this instance of parallelism may indeed indicate rivalry between the princes of the two realms. I have showed that Ottoman documents call Hilandar "the monastery of the prince of Wallachia" (Basarab the Younger) in 1481, thus while Mara Branković still lived and when Ștefan the Great of Moldavia had already granted at least two donations to the Serbian monasteries on Athos.<sup>130</sup> The same is true of Vlad the Monk, who openly proclaimed himself the new *ktetor* of Hilandar, saying that Mara Branković had asked him to care for the monastery after her death. Both of these Wallachian princes have started their careers as the

political clients of Ștefan the Great and owed him their thrones; at the same time, Ștefan himself did not cease his donations to Hilandar. Furthermore, the Branković from Hungary continued claiming of their status as hereditary *ktetors* of Hilandar. In the charter they delivered for the Serbian laura in 1486 Despot Djuradj Branković (future monk Maxim), together with his mother Angelina and his brother, future Despot Jovan, assert it explicitly.<sup>131</sup> Some years later (1503), Jovan's widow, "Despotica" Jelena Jakšić, also gave 100 ducats to "our monastery, the imperial and great Lavra of the Most Saint Mother of God Hilandar" (*монастироу нашему царские и великие Лавры пресветые Богородице Хиандарьские*).<sup>132</sup>

Who then was really the "patron" of the Serbian lavra? Was there really only one "patron"? And if there was only one, what was his claim to exercise such "patronage"?

Regardless of the formulas used in Ottoman documents, we should note that not one Wallachian prince actually called Hilandar "his monastery" in the charters of donation. Rather this term is used by Petru Rareș in 1533, suggesting that the prince of Moldavia, husband of a Branković princess, wished to become the protector *par excellence* of the Serbian house, despite the fact that the Wallachian princes were also offering their financial support.<sup>133</sup> Thus we might suppose that *this close and constant relation with the Serbian monastery was based on some kinship ties between the Wallachian and Moldavian princes and the Branković family and/or their allies*. Nor should we forget that in the Kingdom of Hungary the title of despot was transmitted in the female line too, from the Branković to the Berislavić.<sup>134</sup>

#### BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: MOLDAVIAN AND WALLACHIAN PRINCES BETWEEN ATHOS AND CONSTANTINOPLE/ISTANBUL

We cannot end this discussion without referring—very briefly, and with no claims to provide any definitive answer—to two further problems. The first is that of ecclesiastical relations between the two Romanian principalities and the Great Church of Constantinople. Here the question is whether the Wallachian and Moldavian princes could have ties to Athos without also maintaining cordial relations with the Ecumenical Patriarch. If the answer is quite clear in the case of Wallachia,<sup>135</sup> the same cannot be said of Moldavia.

Here two competing opinions confront and sometimes clash. They can be summed up fairly quickly; the first holds that the Moldavian Church was autonomous, if not indeed autocephalous, given that there is no verifiable information to indicate that the Church was in any way effectively subordinate to the Ecumenical Patriarch. Moreover, it holds that Ștefan the Great

Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

When Isaac ascended the throne in September 1185 he was immediately faced with the Norman invasion of the Balkans; Dyrrachion and Thessalonike had already fallen and the Norman forces were marching unopposed towards Constantinople. The new emperor launched a massive counter-offensive which succeeded in swiftly expelling the invaders and subsequently negotiated an important alliance (or rather a renewal of the pre-existing alliance) with the Hungarians whereby he married the daughter of King Béla III, Margaret, and restored the *status quo ante* in the western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> The agreement not only secured peace in the empire's northwestern frontier, putting an end to Hungarian encroachment, but also resolved the question of Serbia, to which Béla formally renounced all claims.<sup>10</sup> The marriage, however, produced an unexpected result. Isaac had intended that the royal wedding be paid from the imperial estates, but demands were also made on Anchialos and other neighboring towns, provoking the local inhabitants to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when the emperor refused to enlist the local Vlach leaders, the brothers Theodore and Asen, in the imperial forces and grant them an estate producing a small income in the vicinity of the Haimos Mountains.<sup>12</sup> The two brothers enlisted the support of St. Demetrios to their cause in order to mobilize their compatriots and launched a full-scale rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Without opposition they extended their control over the regions outside the Haimos Mountains. Theodore assumed the name Peter, after Peter I who had ruled Bulgaria in the tenth century, and was crowned tsar. Having failed to capture Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, the rebels commenced their devastating raids.<sup>14</sup> Isaac responded with a series of counter-offensives in the following decade, but achieved limited success. The fighting seems to have mainly taken place in the regions extending from Sofia and Lovitzos (Loveč) to the west, to Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea in the east, and as far as Arkadiopolis in Thrace to the south.<sup>15</sup>

The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas



grants to multiple monasteries never spoke of them in these terms; some houses are indeed called "the monastery of My Lordship" but others are not. I believe that we must enquire further as to the meaning of this divergent usage. Hilandar is a relevant example; thus in the chrysobull of November 1492, Vlad the Monk does *not* call it "the monastery of My Lordship" as we might expect, although he openly says that Mara Branković had entrusted to him the patronage over the great Serbian lavra.<sup>151</sup>

The Ottoman documents available to us do little to clarify the situation, knowing that Islamic law did not recognize moral persons but addressed only to individuals. Nevertheless, from the facts at hand we can at least deduce that there were variations in status for the Athonite monasteries in their dealings with the Wallachian princes. Thus, while the charter granted by Bayezid II at Vlad the Monk's request (29th June–7th July 1491) clearly states that Koutlounousiou "is the monastery of the said prince" (*voyvoda' nuñ manāstiri*, translated by the editors as "monastère dudit voïvode"),<sup>152</sup> the charter of Süleyman the Magnificent makes no such specification. Since this confirms earlier decisions by Bayezid II and Selim I at the request of previous Wallachian princes, we may suppose that Süleyman considered Radu of Afumați (who requested this new document) to have the same status as his predecessors had allowed to the earlier princes.<sup>153</sup> If so, this confirms the particular status of Koutlounousiou in relation to the Wallachian princes, to which we have referred above.<sup>154</sup>

What of relations with other monasteries? Contrary to what is usually claimed, the Ottoman documents in favor of Dionysiou say no more than that the monastery "is connected" with the Wallachian prince (*bana mute 'allik manastirdir*). Elisabeth Zachariadou points out that the phrase here is "too vague" to allow any conclusions as to the Wallachian princes' legal status in their dealings with the monastery from the Ottoman administration's point of view.<sup>155</sup> The same is true of Vatopedi.<sup>156</sup> Hilandar itself is a separate case which requires further consideration, since we know that an Ottoman document of 1481 considered that the monastery "belongs to the voivode of Walachia" Basarab the Younger.<sup>157</sup> Further, a document of 1492, referring to another, older charter, even attests double "patronage" by the rival cousins who took the throne in Wallachia, Basarab the Younger and Vlad the Monk, and states that the monastery belonged to both of them, and to their house, as confirmed in another acts issued in 1506 and 1513.<sup>158</sup> In this context, as the documents cited show, the family dimension of the deed of donation is evident once more, quite apart from the political implications suggested by the open conflict between the two branches of the Wallachian dynasty. However, another Ottoman document issued in 1506 (during the reign of Radu the Great) merely states that the monastery "is connected to the Wallachian prince," just as in the cases of Koutlounousiou, Dionysiou, and Vatopedi.

Under these circumstances, and until we have further material on which to base a more thorough discussion, we must be cautious of stating that "when the Romanian voivodes interceded with the sultans, this was primarily based upon their rights and obligations as *ktetor* which were recognized by the Ottomans"<sup>159</sup> and we must particularly give up the idea that these princes had the right to direct church affairs "by virtue of their right of patronage, inherited from Byzantium."<sup>160</sup> Thus we must also reconsider the whole interpretation that the Wallachian and Moldavian princes were demonstrating *imperial ambitions* by the mere fact that they were the protectors *de jure* and *de facto* for the whole complex of monasteries on Athos.

None of this diminishes in any way the exceptional ideological importance of Mount Athos for the Wallachian and Moldavian monarchs, which explains why they took on the role of benefactors to the Athonite monasteries. This is reinforced by the way that, as we have shown, this dimension of princely power was used as an argument in the political and ideological battle between competing branches of the dynasty. Nevertheless, although the chrysobulls of donation always proclaim that the voivodes were following on from the "emperors and princes"<sup>161</sup> who had shown their devotion and cared for the houses of God, this says no more than that the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia thereby intended to join—very late, as it happens—the family of Orthodox monarchs, whose fundamental task was to care for the souls of their subjects and for their own. This is precisely the message that the *protos* Chariton addressed to the Wallachian prince in 1369. This does not mean that they either assumed from the very first, or came to assume, any role as "patrons" of the whole of Orthodoxy, nor that they had any legal right to the position when, in time, they came to occupy it in the context of the disappearance of all other Orthodox dynasties of the Balkans.<sup>162</sup> Their only administrative capacity was that, for a variety of reasons, they were able to intervene with the sultan and Ottoman authorities on behalf of one or another monastery.<sup>163</sup> Here again we must note that we only have surviving records of those cases where such intervention met with success; we know nothing at all about any failed attempts.

Part of the Byzantine spiritual and political tradition, this dimension of participation in the destiny of Orthodoxy arrived north of the Danube clad in Southern Slavic vestments, at a moment when Byzantium itself and all other Orthodox states of the Balkans were losing ground in the face of the Ottomans. The role of Southern Slavic monasticism in this process was certainly essential, given that the Bulgarian and Serbian states were close neighbors to the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, especially since all belonged to a culture that used the same language. In this context, family ties seem to have played an uncommonly large role, as indicated by what we currently know of the history of relations with Hilandar.



Those rare donations by Wallachian and Moldavian princes to Athos in the period before the Ottoman conquests of Constantinople and the last Serbian state all show that the principalities were not yet integrated into the Byzantine Commonwealth at the time. The monastery of Koutloumousiou, which had become "Wallachia's house" through the *protos* Chariton's initiative in 1360, was for a long time an exceptional case. The two princes north of the Danube became protectors of Holy Mountain and of Balkan Orthodoxy to a much greater extent *after they had accepted Ottoman suzerainty*, a role which grew as their realms were integrated into the Ottoman system. On the other hand, as can be seen from the cases of Ștefan the Great, Petru Rareș or Radu of Afumați, charitable giving to Mount Athos does not in the least exclude military adventures against the Ottomans—indeed, quite the opposite.<sup>164</sup> However paradoxical it may seem, these two aspects do not contradict one another and were indeed part of the same reality: while politically and administratively the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia depended on the Sultan as vassals, spiritually they never ceased—and never would cease—to be Christian rulers, for whom the end of Ottoman suzerainty always seemed near, and was devoutly to be wished.

## NOTES

1. P. Ș. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains. Recherches sur leurs relations du milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1654* (Rome, 1986), p. 33.

2. G. Ostrogorsky, "Die byzantinische Staatenhierarchie," *Annales de l'Institut Kondakov* 8 (1936), pp. 41–61 [reprint in idem, *Zur byzantinischen Geschichte* (Darmstadt, 1973)]; idem, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 35 (1956), pp. 1–14; Fr. Dölger, "Die Familie der Könige in Mittelalter," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 60 (1940), pp. 397–420 [reprint in idem, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Ettal, 1953)]; A. Grabar, "God and the 'Family of Princes' presided over by the Byzantine Emperor," *Harvard Slavic Studies* 2 (1954), pp. 117–23; I. Al. Biliarsky, *Hierarchia. L'ordre sacré. Étude de l'esprit romanique* (Fribourg, 1997).

3. Document from September 1369; see *Documenta Romania Historica. B. Țara Românească*, vol. 1 (1247–1500), P. P. Panaitescu and D. Mioc (eds.) (Bucharest, 1966), pp. 499–505 (hereafter: DRH. B); *Actes de Kutlunus. Texte* (Paris, 1988), ed. P. Lemerle, p. 103 (no. 26). This is a direct quotation from the *Homily* of Theodor Synkellos dedicated to the miraculous rescue of Constantinople by the Mother of God in 626. The same expression was commonly used to designate Constantinople, indicating that social actors saw both places as equally sacred within the Orthodox world; I. Biliarsky, "Saint Constantin, Mont Athos et l'idée de la sainteté de l'Empire durant la Turcocratie," *Diritto @ storia* 2 (2003) (<http://www.dirittoestoria.it/memorie2/Testi%20delle%20Comunicazioni/Biliarski-Saint-Constantin.htm>). Later,

Chariton was appointed metropolitan of Wallachia (1372). As early as 1376 he became *protos* of Mount Athos; see *Actes de Kutlunus*, pp. 8–13; Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 40–51; L. Cotovanu, "Caritone di Koutloumousiou e la presenza romana sul Monte Athos nel XIV secolo," in S. Chialà and Lisa Cremaschi (eds.), *Atanasio e il monachesimo al Monte Athos* (Comunità di Bose, 2005), pp. 153–81.

4. See Șt. Andreescu, "Alianțe dinastice ale domnilor Țării Românești (secolele XIV–XVI)," in I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu, and V. Ciobanu (eds.), *Românii în istoria universală*, vol. 2/1 (Iași, 1987), pp. 675–84; D. Pleșia, "Genealogia Basarabilor, sec. XII–XVII," in *Io, Mircea mare voevod și domn. . .* (Râmnicu Vâlcea, 1986).

5. On Nicodemus, see E. Lăzărescu, "Nicodim de la Tismana și rolul său în cultura veche românească. I (până în 1385)," *Romanoslavica* 11 (1965), pp. 237–85; P. Ș. Năsturel, "Cuviosul Nicodim cel sfințit și odăjdiiile mitropolitului Antim Critopol de la Tismana," *Mitropolia Olteniei* 11, nos. 7–8 (1959), pp. 419–30; E. Turdeanu, "Les premiers écrivains religieux en Valachie: l'hégoumène Nicodème de Tismana et le moine Philothée," in idem, *Études de littérature roumaine et d'écrits slaves et grecs des Principautés Roumaines* (Leiden, 1985), pp. 15–50, here pp. 17–37; T. Teoteoi, "Nicodème de Tismana, archimandrite et porteur d'épigonation," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 45, nos. 1–4 (2007), pp. 101–15. The despot Stefan Lazarević granted both monasteries properties within Serbian lands; see P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, ed. Gh. Lazăr (Bucharest, 2000), pp. 179–182; A. Veselinović, "Tri povelje iz XV veka za manastire Tismana i Vodica," *Stari Srpski Arhiv* 8 (2009), pp. 183–205; M. Coman, "Podunavia și relațiile sârbo-muntene în secolele XIV–XVI," in R. G. Păun and O. Cristea (eds.), *Istoria: utopie, amintire și proiect de viitor. Studii de istorie oferite Profesorului Andrei Pippidi la împlinirea a 65 de ani* (Iași, 2013), pp. 239–59.

6. According to Turdeanu, although a certain continuity of the Bulgarian literary tradition really existed in Moldavia, "cette continuité n'est représentée, dans les premières années du XVe siècle, que par Camblak dont la biographie ne fournit pas un exemple de l'existence d'un exode bulgare en Moldavie, après la chute de Târnovo"; E. Turdeanu, "Les Principautés roumaines et les Slaves du Sud: rapports littéraires et religieux," in idem, *Études de littérature*, 7. See also I. Iufu, "Despre prototipurile literaturii slavo-române din secolul al XV-lea," *Mitropolia Olteniei* 15, nos. 7–8 (1963), pp. 511–35; idem, "Mănăstirea Moldovița—centru cultural important din perioada culturii române în limba slavonă (sec. XV–XVIII)," *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* 39, nos. 7–8 (1963), pp. 428–55. Recently, however, it has been argued that the number of the Bulgarian refugees Northern Danube was truly important; D. I. Mureșan, "Zographou et la transmission de l'idée impériale bulgare en Moldavie," *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 2 (2011) [*Studies in honour of Professor Vassil Gjuzelev*], pp. 703–53, using data from Al. I. Gonța, "Bulgarii și sârbii în Țările Române în secolele al XV-lea și al XVI-lea," in idem, *Studii de istorie medievală*, ed. M. M. Székely (Iași, 1998), pp. 72–88. However, Gonța emphasized that the number of Bulgarian villages in Moldavia (nineteen) was insignificant compared to the total number of villages and towns existing at that time.

7. The two fundamental monographs on this topic are Val. Al. Georgescu, *Bizanțul și instituțiile românești până în secolul XVIII* (Bucharest, 1980), and A.



Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI–XVIII*, (Bucharest, 1983; 2001).

8. See the bibliography in N. I. Pantazopoulos, *Ο δικάφαλος αετός. Η εξέλιξη ενός συμβόλου* (Thessaloniki, 2001). See also A. V. Solovjev, 'Les emblemes héraldiques de Byzance et les Slaves,' *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 7 (1935), pp. 119–64; G. Alef, "The Adoption of the Muscovite Two-Headed Eagle: A Discordant View," *Speculum* 41, no. 1 (1966), pp. 1–21. The history of this symbol in Romanian lands was explored by D. Năstase; see, among others, "L'aigle bicéphale dissimulée dans les armoiries des pays roumains. Vers une cryptohéraldique," in *Roma, Costantinopoli, Mosca (Atti del I Seminario internazionale di studi storici "Da Roma alla Terza Roma," Roma 21–23 aprile 1981)* (Naples, 1983), pp. 357–74; idem, "'Necunoscut' ale izvoarelor istoriei românești," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A. D. Xenopol"* 30 (1993), pp. 483–99; idem, "Vulturii bicefali de la mănăstirea Putna," in *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Atlet al credinței creștine* (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2004), pp. 71–81 (hereafter: *Atlet al credinței*); idem, "Sfințirea mănăstirii Argeș și cruciada antiotomană," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 30 (2012), pp. 77–118. See also T. Teoteoi, "L'aigle impérial en tant que motif littéraire et source d'histoire comparée," in E. Popescu ed., *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, vol. 4 (Bucharest, 2001). Future research on this topic would profit greatly from A. Boureau, *L'Aigle. Chronique politique d'un emblème* (Paris, 1985).

9. Tellingly, the scribe who made the copy for the Moldavian prince Ștefan the Great (1474) omitted to transcribe the part originally dedicated to Șišman; see E. Turdeanu, *La littérature bulgare au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle et sa diffusion dans les Pays Roumains* (Paris, 1947), p. 104; G. Mihăilă, "Tradiția literară constantiniană, de la Eusebiu al Cezareei la Nichifor Calist Xanthopoulos, Eftimie al Târnovei și domnii Țărilor Române," in idem, *Cultură și literatură română veche în context european. Studii și texte* (Bucharest, 1979), pp. 281–332, here 264. See also Kl. Ivanova, "Vizantiyskie iztočnici na Pohvalata za Konstantin i Elena ot Evtimii Tŭrnovski," *Starobŭlgarska literatura* 10 (1981), pp. 3–15.

10. See E. A. Zachariadou, "Mount Athos and the Ottomans c. 1350–1550," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5, *Eastern Christianity*, ed. M. Angold (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 154–69; K. Smyrlis, "Mount Athos in the Fifteenth Century: Crisis and the Beginning of Recovery," in *To Ἅγιον Ὄρος στον 15ο και 16ο αἰώνα* (Thessaloniki, 2012), p. 38, note 30 (with comprehensive bibliography).

11. See, among others, E. A. Zachariadou, "Les notables laïques et le Patriarcat œcuménique après la chute de Constantinople," *Turcica* 30 (1998), pp. 119–134; Kl.-P. Matschke: "Research problems concerning the transition to Tourkokratia: The Byzantinist standpoint," in F. Adanir and S. Faroqi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 2002), pp. 79–113; H. İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), pp. 104–29; P. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques et politiques entre le Patriarcat de Constantinople et l'administration ottomane de 1453 à 1600 (d'après les documents grecs et ottomans)*, unpublished PhD Diss., University of Paris I, 1985.

12. The first direct contacts with the Ottomans date from the 1390s (Wallachia) and 1420 (Moldavia).

13. *Actes de Kutlumus*, pp. 117–21.

14. See, for instance, Vlad the Monk's charters to Philotheou and Saint Panteleimon, *DRH. B.*, vol. 1, pp. 323–6 (no. 202, 1487–1492), pp. 424–7 (no. 263, 1495 September–1496 August 30), and that of Vlad the Younger to Saint Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai, *DRH. B.*, vol. 3 (1526–1535), ed. D. Mioc (Bucharest, 1975), pp. 162–66 (no. 102, 25th October 1530). See also Vlad Vintilă's charter to the Great Lavra, pp. 225–229 (no. 143, 12th January 1533). On the motivations of the Wallachian and Moldavian donations to Athos, see, among others, Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, especially pp. 305–11; G. Durand, "Une conséquence inattendue de la politique fiscale du Sultan Sélim II: de l'origine de la dédicace aux autorités athonites des couvents de Valachie et de Moldavie," *Turcica* 44 (2012–2013), pp. 167–79.

15. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques*, 296; M.-H. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400—vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 2008), pp. 118–9.

16. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 180–6.

17. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 177–8.

18. I leave aside for the moment the charters granted to Hilandar. It should be noted that not all the documents granted to the monasteries were princely charters of the chrysobull type (χρυσόβουλλον); some of them, much simpler and short, are only "letters" (πισανίε) confirming previous donations. For all this, see D. P. Bogdan, *Diplomatica slavo-română din secolele XIV și XV* (Bucharest, 1938), pp. 18ff; M. Cazacu, "La chancellerie des principautés valaque et moldave (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)," in Chr. Hannick (ed.), *Kanzleiwesen und Kanzleisprachen im östlichen Europa* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 1999), pp. 87–127, here pp. 108ff.

19. See C. Codarcea, *Société et pouvoir en Valachie (1601–1654). Entre la coutume et la loi* (Bucharest, 2002), pp. 319–39.

20. See Vlad the Drowned's charter, *DRH. B.*, vol. 3, pp. 182–7 (no. 114, May 1531). This idea may be even older; see Neagoe Basarab's charter, *DRH. B.*, vol. 2, (1501–1525), Șt. Ștefănescu and O. Diaconescu (eds.) (Bucharest, 1972), pp. 257–9 (no. 130, 7th December 1514); see below.

21. Literally, οἰκοκύριος / οἰκοκύρος means *pater familias*, householder.

22. *DRH. B.*, vol. 2, pp. 499–505. It should be stressed that no such indication exists in the charter (often considered a "true *typikon*") granted by Ștefan the Great to "his monastery" of Zographou; see *Documenta Romaniae Historica. A. Moldova*, vol. 2, (1449–1486), L. Șimanschi, G. Ignat, and D. Agache (eds.) (Bucharest, 1976), pp. 191–4 (no. 135, 10th May 1466) (hereafter: *DRH. A.*).

23. See, for instance Radu the Great's charters to Saint Panteleimon monastery, *DRH. B.*, vol. 1, pp. 424–7 (no. 263, 1495, September–1496, 30th August, prayer to Saint Panteleimon) and to Kaproullè, pp. 486–9 (no. 298, 31st January 1500, prayers addressed to Saint Nicholas, the monastery's spiritual patron, and to the Theotokos).

24. See R. G. Păun, "La circulation des pouvoirs dans les Pays Roumains au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Repères pour un modèle théorique," *New Europe College Yearbook* (1998–1999), pp. 265–310; idem, "Élu de la matrice de ma mère: pouvoir et prédestination aux XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles," in I. Biliarsky and R. G. Păun (eds.), *The Biblical*



*Models of Power and Law / Les modèles bibliques du pouvoir et du droit* (Frankfurt/Main, 2008), pp. 225–70.

25. Vlad the Monk's charter to Saint Panteleimon monastery, *DRH. B.*, vol. 1, pp. 326–8 (no. 203, 12th June 1487).

26. Radu the Great's charter to Saint Catherine monastery on Mount Sinai, *DRH. B.*, vol. 1, pp. 453–6 (no. 279, 15th September 1497).

27. Radu the Great's charter to Saint Panteleimon monastery, *DRH. B.*, pp. 424–7 (no. 263, 1495 September–1496 30th August).

28. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 39–71.

29. P. J. Geary, "Échanges et relations entre les vivants et les morts dans la société du haut Moyen Âge," *Droits et Cultures* 12 (1986), pp. 3–17 [collected in idem, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, New York and London, 1994), pp. 77–94]; N. Zemon Davis, "Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France," *Daedalus* 106, no. 2 (1977), pp. 87–111; L. Steindorff, "Donations and Commemorations in the Muscovite Realm—a Medieval or Early Modern Phenomenon," in idem (ed.), *Religion und Integration im Moskauer Russland. Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen. 14.–17. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 2010), pp. 477–98, especially pp. 494ff.

30. R. Crețeanu, "Traditions de famille dans les donations roumaines au Mont Athos," in E. Stănescu and N.-Ș. Tanașoca (eds.), *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1979), pp. 135–52. In general, see N. Iorga, "Muntele Athos în legătură cu țările noastre," *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secției Istorice* (2nd series) 36 (1914), pp. 447–517; H. Matanov, "Le mont Athos et les rapports politiques dans les Balkans durant la deuxième moitié du XIVe siècle," *Études balkaniques* 17, no. 1 (1981), pp. 69–100.

31. *Istoria Țării Românești 1290–1690. Letopiseșul Cantacuzinesc*, C. Grecescu and D. Simonescu (eds.) (Bucharest, 1960), p. 31.

32. *Istoria Țării Românești*, p. 33.

33. *Istoria Țării Românești*, p. 33.

34. See, for instance, D. Năstase, "Sfințirea"; I. Moldoveanu, "Sfântul Voievod Neagoe Basarab (1512–1521). O specială privire asupra relațiilor sale cu mănăstirile de la Sfântul Munte Athos, la 500 ani de la înscăunarea sa," in *Sfântul voievod Neagoe Basarab—cîitor de biserică și cultură românească* (Bucharest, 2012), pp. 97–115.

35. Gavril Protul, *Viața și traiul sfinției sale părintelui nostru Nifon, patriarhul Țarigradului care au strălucit între multe patimi și ispite în Țarigrad și în Țara Muntenească*, ed. T. Simedrea (Bucharest, 1937); V. Grecu, *Viața Sfântului Nifon. O redacție grecească inedită* (Bucharest, 1944). On the Craiovescu family, see I. C. Filitti, "Craioveștii și rolul lor politic," *Arhivele Olteniei* 77–78 (1935), pp. 1–16; idem, "Banatul Olteniei și Craioveștii," *Arhivele Olteniei* 11 (1932), pp. 1–128. On the relationship between Neagoe and the Craiovescu family, see D. Pleșia, "Neagoe Basarab—originea, familia și o scurtă privire asupra politicii Țării Românești la începutul secolului al XVI-lea" (I), *Valachica* (Târgoviște, 1969), pp. 45–60; (II), *Valachica* (Târgoviște, 1970), pp. 113–42; N. Stoicescu, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova, sec. XIV–XVII* (Bucharest, 1971), pp. 17–19; 46–47; 74. On their relations with the Holy Mountain, see Crețeanu,

"Traditions de famille"; I. Rizea, "Les boyards Craiovești, protecteurs du monachisme athonite post-byzantin," in E. Popescu and T. Teoteoi (eds.), *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, vol. 5 (Bucharest, 2006), pp. 423–58. On Gabriel, new data are furnished by D. Radoslavova, "Towards the Portrait of Gabriel, the Athonite Protos of the First Half of the 16th Century: The Russian Connection," in M. Jokovic, D. E. Collins, M. A. Johnson, and P. Matejic (eds.), *Love of Learning and Devotion to God in Orthodox Monasteries*, vol. 1 (Belgrade–Columbus, 2006), pp. 191–98.

36. See R. G. Păun, "La couronne est à Dieu. Neagoe Basarab et l'image du pouvoir pénitent," in P. Guran (ed.), *L'Empereur-hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine* (Bucharest, 2001), pp. 186–224. See also O. V. Olar, "Dracula à rebours. Notes sur la 'Vie de Saint Niphon' (BHG 1373a)," in Fr. Mosetti Casaretto (ed.), *Il corpo impuro e le sue rappresentazioni nelle letterature medievali* (Alexandria, 2012), pp. 435–60.

37. All available Greek copies come from the eighteenth century; see P. Ș. Năsturel, "Recherches sur les rédactions gréco-roumaines de la *Vie de Saint Niphon II, Patriarche de Constantinople*," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 5, nos. 1–2 (1967), pp. 41–77.

38. L. Vranoussis, "Texte și documente românești inedite din Grecia," *Magazin istoric* 6, no. 2 (1972), pp. 6–10, reprinted in D. Zamfirescu, *Neagoe Basarab și "Învățăturile către fiul său Theodosie."* *Problemele controversate* (Bucharest, 1973), pp. 383–5. The text is preserved in Varlaam monastery on Meteora (Ms. 38).

39. It was edited only recently by M. A. Kakouros, "Ἡ πρώτη ἄσματικὴ ἀκολουθία (ca. 1514–1516) πρὸς τιμὴν τοῦ ἁγίου Νήφωνος, ὁ ἐκεῖ περιεχόμενος Συναξαρικὸς Βίος καὶ οἱ νεώτερες ἀκολουθίες (19ος αἰ.): ἱστορία τῆς παράδοσης καὶ τῆς λειτουργικῆς χρήσης τῶν κειμένων στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Διονυσίου ἀπὸ τὴν σύνταξή τους ἕως σήμερα. Μὲ τὴν *editio princeps* τῶν δύο μορφῶν τοῦ Συναξαρικοῦ Βίου (σὲ κριτικὴ ἔκδοσις)," in *Ὁ Ἅγιος Νήφων πατριάρχης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (1508–2008). Τόμος ἐπετειακὸς ἐπὶ τῇ συμπληρώσει πεντακοσίων ἐτῶν ἀπὸ τῆς κοιμήσεως αὐτοῦ* (Mount Athos, 2008), pp. 272–345.

40. Scholars date this somewhere between 1634 and the end of the 1670s; see the summary of these discussions in Al. Mareș, "Despre data traducerii *Vieții* patriarhului Nifon și despre 'momentul' inserării ei în *Letopiseșul Cantacuzinesc*," in idem, *Scrieri și cultură românească veche* (Bucharest, 2005), pp. 348–57.

41. When Patriarch Makarius III Ibn al-Za'im of Antioch passed through Wallachia (1658), the annals he compiled in Arabic followed local Old Slavonic chronicles, by that time the only available sources on the country's history; see V. Căndea, "Letopiseșul Țării Românești (1292–1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim," *Studii* 23, no. 4 (1970), pp. 673–92. In Makarius' annals, Neagoe's reign and charitable acts are described in only few lines, while Niphon's name does not feature at all; see Ioana Feodorof, "La Chronique de Valachie (1292–1664). Texte arabe du Patriarche Macaire Za'im. Introduction, édition du texte arabe et traduction française," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 52 (1991–1992), pp. 3–71, here 44.

42. A family of Byzantine origins who had settled in Wallachia at the beginning of the sixteenth century and began to dominate political life there during the reign of their kinsman Matei Basarab; see D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of*



*Cantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus)*, ca. 1100–1460 (Washington, D.C., 1968); Stoicescu, *Dicționar*, pp. 41, 134–46; J.-M. Cantacuzene, *Mille ans dans les Balkans. Chronique des Cantacuzène dans la tourmente des siècles* (Paris, 1992).

43. The first prince to identify the Craiovescu (Neagoe's family) with the Basarab name of the old ruling dynasty and adopt for himself the name *Basarab* was Radu Șerban (1602–1611); see Stoicescu, *Dicționar*, pp. 94–5; C. Rezachevici, "Domeniul boieresc al lui Radu Șerban," *Studii* 23, no. 3 (1970), pp. 469–91. The founder of the Cantacuzino family in Wallachia, Constantin, married Radu Șerban's daughter; thereafter, all the Cantacuzinos declared themselves descendants of the Craiovescu-Basarab family, and thereby of the first princes of the country. Șerban Cantacuzino, for instance, constantly claimed to be a scion of both the Basarabs and the Byzantine emperors from the Cantacuzenus family; see D. Ionescu, "Șerban Cantacuzène et la restauration byzantine. Un idéal à travers ses images," in Stănescu and Tanașoca (eds.), *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, vol. 1, pp. 239–267. At the same time, Neagoe's figure was "revived" by Matei Basarab, who claimed to be Neagoe's descendant, to legitimize his right to the throne. Indeed, on his father's side Matei came from the Craiovescu clan, and on his mother's side from the family of Neagoe's mother; see Stoicescu, *Dicționar*, p. 49; Crețeanu, "Traditions de famille," p. 139; Șt. Andreescu, "Ascendența maternă a lui Matei Vodă Basarab," *Arhiva Genealogică* 3, nos. 3–4 (1996), pp. 197–203. His successor Constantin Șerban (1654–1658) was Radu Șerban's illegitimate son. These two lines came together in the person of Constantin Brâncoveanu, who in his turn came from the Craiovescu-Basarab (on his father's side) and the Cantacuzinos (on his mother's side) alike; see R. Theodorescu, "Dunga cea mare a rodului și neamului său. Note istorice în arta brâncovenească"; D. Barbu, "Arta brâncovenească: semnele timpului și structurile spațiului," both in P. Cernovodeanu and Fl. Constantiniu (eds.), *Constantin Brâncoveanu* (Bucharest, 1989), pp. 180–202 and 233–62, respectively; Șt. Andreescu, "Neamul boierilor din Brâncoveni," in M. D. Sturdza ed., *Familile boierești din Moldova și Țara Românească. Enciclopedie istorică, genealogică și biografică*, vol. 2 (Bucharest, 2011), pp. 249–57.

44. I. R. Mircea, "Relations culturelles roumano-serbes au XVIe siècle," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 1, nos. 3–4 (1963), pp. 377–419; Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*.

45. *Istoria Țării Românești*, 30. This remark apparently refers to the harbour Neagoe built in Askalon, which is Avlona or Vlora on the Southern Albanian coast; see T. Teoteoi, "Ascalon—a mistaken toponym in the *Life* of Niphon II, patriarch of Constantinople," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 19, no. 3 (1981), pp. 611–22. In the text Askalon is included among Koutloumousiou's *metochia*, which means that the author refers in fact to this monastery. This fragment too is missing in the available Greek versions of the *Life* of Saint Niphon.

46. *DRH. B*, vol. 2, pp. 257–59 (no. 130, 7th December 1514). The same document mentions that Neagoe continued here works already initiated by Radu the Great and Vlad the Younger, his predecessors and rivals.

47. It has been pointed out that in the *Life* of Niphon, Dionysiou stands in a privileged position; see Crețeanu, "Traditions de famille," pp. 138–9. Thus historians

wonder whether relations between Wallachia and Dionysiou may not have been even older; see Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 142–45. See also Fl. Marinescu, *Ποιμαντική ἐγγραφή τοῦ Ἀγίου Ὁποῦς. Ἀρχείου Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Διονυσίου* (Athens, 2013), pp. 9–11.

48. Documents of 24th May 1504 and 4th–13th August 1513 (during Neagoe's reign); E. A. Zachariadou, "Ottoman Documents from the archives of Dionysiou (Mount Athos) 1495–1520," *Südost-Forschungen* 30 (1971), pp. 1–35, here 8–10.

49. Some historians consider that Niphon came to Wallachia in 1504, the same year when Radu the Great himself traveled to Constantinople; N. M. Popescu, "Nifon II, Patriarhul Constantinopolului," *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* (2nd series) 36 (1914), pp. 734–97, here 782. See also Năsturel, "Recherches," p. 43 and note 12. A summary of these discussions in A. Falangas, *Présences grecques dans les Pays Roumains (XIVe–XVIe siècles). Le témoignage des sources narratives roumaines* (Bucharest, 2009), pp. 149–64 (he argues that Niphon arrived in Wallachia around 1500). See also N. Panou, "Greek-Romanian Symbiotic Patterns in the Early Modern Period: History, Mentalities, Institutions" (II), *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* 4 (2007), pp. 59–104, here 61–85.

50. N. V. Sinycina, "Poslanie Maksima Greka Vasiliyu III ob ustroistve Afonskih monastirey (1518—1519 gg.)," *Vizantiskii Vremennik* 26 (1965), pp. 110–136, here 131; Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, p. 143 and note 9.

51. Scholars think that the cost of these works was covered by Neagoe Basarab, *Actes de Dionysiou. Édition diplomatique. Texte*, ed. N. Oikonomidés (Paris, 1968), pp. 18–9; Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, p. 145. However, Niphon returned to Dionysiou in 1506 and lived there until 11th August 1508; Popescu, "Nifon II," p. 787. Thus there was enough time to start works during his lifetime and with support from Radu the Great (who also died in 1508). Once again, Neagoe carried on his predecessor's initiative.

52. *Istoria Țării Românești*, p. 31. On Neagoe's support to Vatopedi, see Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 90–3. A late source partially confirms the Cantacuzino chronicle but adds: "καὶ πολλὰ χάρισματὰ ἔδωκεν καθὼς καὶ πρόην κτίτορες καὶ ἄρχοντες καὶ ἀθροεντάδες"; T. Bodogae, *Ajutoarele românești la mănăstirile din Sfântul Munte Athos* (Bucharest, 20032), p. 120, note 5 (around 1700). This shows that here too Neagoe in fact followed the example of previous "ktitors, nobles, and princes."

53. According to G. Mantzaridis, there were seven "Miraculous Icons—Holy Relics," in *The Great and Holy Monastery of Vatpedi: Tradition, History, Art*, vol. 1 (Mount Athos, 1998), pp. 118ff.

54. M. M. Masnić, "The icon of the Holy Virgin Vatopedini with a portrait of voevoda Ioan Radul," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 40 (2003), pp. 313–21. Nobody has observed that this icon was already known; see M. Zarić, "La Bitolia, un portret al lui Radu cel Mare," *Magazin Istoric* 18, no. 11 (1984), pp. 29–30; V. Căndea, *Mărturia românești peste hotare. Creații românești și izvoare despre români în colecții din străinătate*, vol. 3 (Bucharest, 2011), p. 216.

55. According to Masnić, the icon was painted on Mount Athos by an artist of the Cretan School, perhaps Nikolaos Ritzos (d. 1507). As Radu's portrait on the icon is almost identical to that in Govora monastery (Wallachia), it is more likely that the





Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

When Isaac ascended the throne in September 1185 he was immediately faced with the Norman invasion of the Balkans; Dyrrachion and Thessalonike had already fallen and the Norman forces were marching unopposed towards Constantinople. The new emperor launched a massive counter-offensive which succeeded in swiftly expelling the invaders and subsequently negotiated an important alliance (or rather a renewal of the pre-existing alliance) with the Hungarians whereby he married the daughter of King Béla III, Margaret, and restored the *status quo ante* in the western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> The agreement not only secured peace in the empire's northwestern frontier, putting an end to Hungarian encroachment, but also resolved the question of Serbia, to which Béla formally renounced all claims.<sup>10</sup> The marriage, however, produced an unexpected result. Isaac had intended that the royal wedding be paid from the imperial estates, but demands were also made on Anchialos and other neighboring towns, provoking the local inhabitants to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when the emperor refused to enlist the local Vlach leaders, the brothers Theodore and Asen, in the imperial forces and grant them an estate producing a small income in the vicinity of the Haimos Mountains.<sup>12</sup> The two brothers enlisted the support of St. Demetrios to their cause in order to mobilize their compatriots and launched a full-scale rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Without opposition they extended their control over the regions outside the Haimos Mountains. Theodore assumed the name Peter, after Peter I who had ruled Bulgaria in the tenth century, and was crowned tsar. Having failed to capture Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, the rebels commenced their devastating raids.<sup>14</sup> Isaac responded with a series of counter-offensives in the following decade, but achieved limited success. The fighting seems to have mainly taken place in the regions extending from Sofia and Lovitzos (Loveč) to the west, to Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea in the east, and as far as Arkadiopolis in Thrace to the south.<sup>15</sup>

The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas



in idem, *De la Iași la Muntele Athos*, pp. 209–21. The oldest extant bede-roll of Rila monastery names Brâncoveanu among the benefactors; see I. Gergova, "Das älteste Gedenkbuch des Rila-Klosters," *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 36, nos. 1–2 (2009), pp. 164–79. Prince Ștefan Cantacuzino confirmed donations made by his relatives and predecessors to Studenica; Turdeanu, "Din vechile schimburi," p. 182.

79. Turdeanu, "Din vechile schimburi," p. 158; M. M. Székely, "Pe marginea unei corespondențe pierdute. Mănăstirea Kosinitza și Țările Române," in O. Cristea, P. Zahariuc, and Gh. Lazăr (eds.), *Aut viam inveniam aut faciam. In honorem Ștefan Andreescu* (Iași, 2012), pp. 417–39; Fl. Marinescu, "Sfântul Neagoe Basarab și ajutorul său către biserici din Răsăritul Ortodox"; N. Moraru, "Daniile Sfântului Voievod Neagoe Basarab către așezămintele ortodoxe din Balcani"; T. Teoteoi, "Neagoe Basarab, inițiator al binefacerilor românești către o mănăstire din Macedonia Orientală, Kosinitza sau Cusnița din *Viața Sfântului Nifon*," all in *Sfântul voievod Neagoe Basarab*, pp. 81–97, 127–151, and 115–127, respectively. His name features in the memorial rolls of Dečani, Sopočani, Lesnovo, Pčinja, and Krušedol; Turdeanu, "Din vechile schimburi," pp. 160, 189–90; Mircea, "Relations," p. 390; M. Tomić and M. Voiculescu, *Поменик манастира Крушедола* (Belgrade, 1996); S. Anuichi, "Pomelnicele mănăstirii Krušedol și relațiile cu Biserica Ortodoxă Română," *Mitropolia Banatului* 32, nos. 4–6 (1982), pp. 322–31; M. Timotijević, "Sremski despoti Brankovići i osnivanje manastira Krušedola," *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 27–28 (1991–1992), pp. 127–50; D. Novakov, "Arheografski opis Pomenika Manastira Krušedola (XVI–XVII vek)," *Arheografski prilozi* 31–32 (2009–2010), pp. 467–500.

80. It is thought that he founded the monasteries of Vratna and Manastirica; Mircea, "Relations," p. 386; M. Nedeljković, "Manastir Manastirica u predanju i istoriji," *Saopštenja* 17 (1983), pp. 155–160. It is certain that he contributed, together with his uncle Gherghina, to the foundation of the Lapušnja monastery (1500–1501); G. Balș, "O biserică a lui Radu cel Mare în Serbia, la Lopušnja," *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 4 (1911), pp. 194–9; B. Knežević, "Ktitori Lapušnje," *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 7 (1971), pp. 37–54; idem, "Manastir Lapušnja," *Saopštenja* 18 (1986), pp. 83–114. According to some traditions, the monastery of Rakovica was also renewed by a Wallachian prince called Radu, most probably the same Radu the Great; B. Knežević, "Prilog datovanju crkve manastira Rakovice," *Saopštenja* 17 (1983), pp. 161–6. His name features in the memorial rolls of Krušedol, Dečani, and Pčinja (together with those of his wife Cătălina, his father Vlad the Monk, and Vlad's wife Maria); E. Turdeanu, "Din vechile schimburi," pp. 152 and 189–91; Mircea, "Relations," p. 386; Tomić, Voiculescu, *Pomenik*, p. 11. He is also credited with refounding the monastery of Kremikovci, near Sofia; Turdeanu, "Din vechile schimburi," p. 151.

81. See I. C. Filitti, "Despina, princesse de Valachie, fille présumée de Jean Brankovitch," *Revista Istorică Română* 1, no. 3 (1931), pp. 241–3; I. R. Mircea and P. Ș. Năsturel, "De l'ascendance de Despina, épouse de Neagoe Basarab," *Romanoslavica* 10 (1964), pp. 435–7; C. Nicolescu, "Princesses serbes sur le trône des Principautés Roumaines. Despina-Militza, princesse de Valachie," *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 5 (1969), pp. 97–129; Pleșia, "Neagoe Basarab."

82. It is interesting to note that Vlad the Monk married Basarab the Younger's widow, Maria; see Pleșia, "Genealogia Basarabilor." We may wonder whether she played any role in the attention both princes paid to Hilandar.

83. Andreescu, "Alianțe dinastice," p. 680. The presence in Wallachia of Salomon Crnojević (d. 1521, in battle against the Turks), son of Djuradj, prince of Montenegro (1490–1496), seems to offer some indirect proof here. It should be noted that the last ruler, Ștefan Crnojević (1496–1498), took shelter on Mount Athos, while another member of the same family, Marko, became a monk at Hilandar, whence he submitted several requests for a *firman* in defence of the monastery's interests; see Boškov, "Dokumenti Baezita II," pp. 135–8; Al. Fotić, "Hilandar's response to crisis and new challenges in the 15th and 16th centuries," in *To Αγίων Όρος*, p. 134; idem, *Sveta Gora*, pp. 30–1, and 182–8.

84. Turdeanu, "Din vechile schimburi," pp. 149–50; Mircea, "Relations," p. 385; Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, p. 127.

85. See Mircea, "Relations," p. 385; G. Mihăilă, "Viața și slujba lui Maxim Branković. Momentul 1507 în letopisețele românești," in idem, *Între Orient și Occident. Studii de cultură și literatură română în secolele al XV-lea—at XVIII-lea* (Bucharest, 1999), pp. 198–223; S. Tomin, "Archbishop Maxim Brankovic. Supplement to understanding of Serbian-Romanian relationships at the beginning of the 16th century"; O. Cristea and L. Pilat, "Le moine, la guerre et la paix: un épisode de la rivalité moldo-valaque au début du XVIe siècle," both in *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe* 1 (2009), pp. 107–21 and 121–41, respectively.

86. P. P. Panaitescu, "Octoiul lui Macarie (1510) și originile tipografiei în Țara Românească," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 57, no. 1 (1939), pp. 2–28.

87. Păun, "La Valachie et le monastère de Chilandar." See also Șt. Ștefănescu, "Éléments nobiliaires balkaniques établis en Valachie à la fin du XVe siècle," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 8, no. 5 (1969), pp. 891–7.

88. Mircea, "Relations," p. 391; Tomić and Voiculescu, *Pomenik*, p. 11.

89. She was known as the "Despotovna," i.e., "daughter of the Despot" or "daughter of Ioan the despot," and used these styles herself; see Mircea, "Relations," p. 392.

90. K. Nevostruev, "Tri hrisovulje u Hilandaru," *Glasnik Srpskog Učenog Društva* 8 (25) (1869), pp. 272–87, here 285–7; see also Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 137–8. This is not however a chrysobull, but rather, as the text indicates, *noveleniie* u *zaniac* (disposition and letter).

91. See Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 246 and 250; Kotzageorgis, *Η Αθωνική μονή Αγίου Παύλου*, p. 33.

92. Turdeanu, "Din vechile schimburi," p. 160; Mircea, "Relations," p. 392. His name also featured in the commemoration roll of the monastery of Kosinitza; see Teoteoi, "Neagoe Basarab," pp. 142–3. It is more difficult to explain why his name, along with those of his wife and father, Ștefan the Great, should be present in the *Synodikon of Tsar Boril*; the explanation must lie in Moldavia's ecclesiastical links with certain centers on Bulgarian territory; see Turdeanu, "La littérature bulgare," pp. 144–7; I. Božilov, A. Totomanova, and I. Biliarsky, *Borilov sinodik. Izdanie i prevod* (Sofia, 2010), p. 356.

93. Șt. Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae. Relațiile politice dintre Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1526–1593* (Bucharest, 1980), pp. 76–105; Pippidi, *Tradiția*, pp. 158–65.



94. The point at which the male line of the Branković died out; M. Spremić, "La famille serbe des Branković. Considérations généalogiques et héraldiques," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 49 (2004), pp. 441–52.

95. Nevostuev, "Tri hršovulje," p. 286. Both phrases are identically found in a charter granted by Petru the Lame (who owed his throne to the Ottomans!) to the same monastery in 1583; *Chilandar et les Pays Roumains*, pp. 203–5; see also Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, p. 196.

96. Mircea, "Relations," p. 397, note 92. Alexandru's name also features in the memorial roll of Saint Paul's monastery, Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, p. 250; Kotzageorgis, *Η Αθωνική μονή Αγίου Παύλου*, p. 34, note 31.

97. D. Petrović, "Mnogoljetstvije rumunskom vojvodi Jovanu Aleksandru," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 13 (1971), pp. 345–52; A. E. Pennington, "A Polychronion in Honour of John Alexander of Moldavia," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 50, no. 118 (1972), pp. 90–9; Pippidi, *Tradiția*, p. 168; E. Turdeanu, "Autori, copii, cărți, zugrăvi și legători de manuscrise în Moldova 1552–1607" (I), *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol" Iași* 1552–1607 (1984), pp. 49–90. The *Lives* of the Serbian rulers and archbishops also circulated in Moldavia; see I. R. Mircea, "Les Vies des rois et des archevêques serbes et leur circulation en Moldavie," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 4, nos. 3–4 (1966), pp. 394–412.

98. On the Serbian tradition in Moldavia, see Pippidi, *Tradiția*, pp. 52ff, 151–71; M. Cazacu and A. Dumitrescu, "Culte dynastique et images votives en Moldavie au XVe siècle. Importance des modèles serbes," *Cahiers balkaniques* 15 (1990), pp. 13–102.

99. HM. SMS 510, f. 133r (new numbering). It was by mistake that I have dated this document on 27th July 1556 and thus attributed it to prince Alexandru Lăpușneanul; see R. G. Păun, "La Moldavie de Ștefan le Grand (1457–1504) et le monastère de Hilandar au Mont Athos. Témoignages et hypothèses," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 50, nos. 1–4 (2012), pp. 167–90, here 169–70, and 188 (fig. 1). See now idem, "La Moldavie de Ștefan le Grand (1457–1504) et le monastère de Hilandar au Mont Athos. Une rectification nécessaire," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 51, nos. 1–4 (2013), pp. 423–6. I beg the reader to take into account this correction. In any case, we have to amend the assertion that "the first Moldavian voyvode known to have assumed the *ktetorship* was Petre Rareș" (p. 135), as maintained by Fotić, "Hilandar's response to crisis," p. 135.

100. See Păun, "La Moldavie de Ștefan le Grand," p. 189 (fig. 2). We can rule out the years in which Ștefan was at open war with the Ottomans (1475–1476). On the other hand, it seems quite certain that Ștefan's ties to Athos went beyond what we can precisely define today. Thus, for example, when Isaija, abbot of Hilandar, traveled to Russia in 1489, he arrived through Moldavia; see B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, vol. 1 (Geneva, 1889), pp. 259–67. It is hard to believe that he did not visit the princely court at Suceava, or that once he visited it, he would have left empty-handed.

101. HM. SMS 519, f. 6r (new numbering), 2r (original numbering); see Păun, "La Moldavie de Ștefan le Grand," pp. 177–8, and 190 (fig. 3).

102. We have only two documents from Ștefan's chancery at all between 5th June 1475 and 10th August 1477; Șt. S. Gorovei and M. M. Székely, *Princeps omni laude maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2005), p. 143.

103. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, p. 183. The document is published in *DRH. A*, vol. 2, pp. 192–4, no. 135.

104. *DRH. A*, vol. 1 (1384–1448), eds. C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu, and L. Șimanschi (Bucharest, 1975), pp. 196–8; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, p. 58.

105. The concern for his own succession is evident when we consider that these documents are the only ones to mention Eudokia throughout her marriage to Ștefan; see C. Rezachevici "Neamul doamnei Evdochia de Kiev, în legătură cu descoperirea pietrei sale de mormânt la Suceava," in *Atlet al credinței*, pp. 113–33, here 122.

106. She left two-thirds of her estates to Hilandar and the rest to Saint Paul. There was a second will issued in 1469; R. Čuk, "Povelja carice Mare manastirima Hilandar i Sv. Pavlu," *Istorijski časopis* 24 (1977), pp. 103–16; idem, "Carica Mara," *Istorijski časopis* 25–26 (1978–1979), pp. 95–115.

107. Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, p. 58. On the importance of Putna, see especially M. M. Székely, "Mănăstirea Putna—loc de memorie," in *Atlet al credinței*, pp. 37–71.

108. Dated some time after the victory at Baia over Mathias Corvinus (December 1467); see L. Șimanschi, *Începutul elaborării cronicii lui Ștefan cel Mare, în Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Portret în istorie* (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2003), pp. 238–5; Șt. Andreescu, "Les débuts de l'historiographie en Moldavie," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 12, no. 6 (1973), pp. 1017–35; idem, "Cronica lui Ștefan cel Mare: înțelesurile unei întreruperi," in idem, *Istoria Românilor: cronicari, misionari, citori* (sec. XV–XVII) (Bucharest, 1997), pp. 118–29.

109. Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, pp. 47–9.

110. On this aspect, see Șt. S. Gorovei, "1473—un an-cheie al domniei lui Ștefan cel Mare," in *Portret în istorie*, pp. 389–395; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, pp. 93–8.

111. This date (1475) must be reconsidered in view of the political context. In 1475, Ștefan was waging war against the Porte, so that we should consider the years 1473/74; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, pp. 139–40.

112. On this aspect, see especially M. M. Székely and Șt. S. Gorovei, "'Semne și minuni' pentru Ștefan voievod. Note de mentalitate medievală," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 16 (1998), pp. 49–64 [collected in *Portret în istorie*, pp. 67–86]; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, pp. 48, 74–5.

113. Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, pp. 93ff.

114. See D. Dinić-Knežević, "Sremski Brankovići," *Istraživanja* 4 (1975), pp. 19–44; S. Čirković, "Poslednji Brankovići," in *Istorijski časopis* 24 (1977), pp. 445–64; M. Spremić, "Srpski despoti u Sremu," in M. Maticki ed., *Srem kroz vekovite. Slojevni kultura Fruške Gore i Srema* (Belgrade, 2007), pp. 45–73.

115. Șimanschi, "Începutul elaborării cronicii"; Andreescu, "Cronica lui Ștefan cel Mare."

116. In the Volovăț church; see Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, pp. 95–6; idem, "Moldova și regalitatea sacră," in *De potestate. Semne și expresii ale puterii în Evul*



*Mediu românesc* (Iași, 2006), pp. 179–214, here 205–14. We shall not examine here the imperial dimension of the deeds of Ștefan's reign, which these authors propose.

117. E. Turdeanu, "L'activité littéraire en Moldavie à l'époque d'Étienne le Grand (1457–1504)," in idem, *Études de littérature*, pp. 113–60. In general, see G. Mihăilă, "Istoriografia românească veche (sec. al XV-lea–începutul sec. al XVII-lea) în raport cu istoriografia bizantină și slavă"; and "Sintagma (Pravila) lui Matei Vlăstariș și începuturile lexicografiei slavo-române (secolele al XV-lea–al XVII-lea)," both in idem, *Contribuții la istoria culturii*, pp. 104–64 and 261–307, respectively.

118. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 249–50.

119. In 1496–1497 abbot Paisij of Saint Panteleimon accompanied the Moldavian envoy to Moscow; it is hard to credit that Ștefan made no donation to this monastery, especially given that Radu the Great of Wallachia did so; see Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, p. 306. See also M. Boškov, "Stroenie atoskog manastira Svetog Pantelejmona u ruskim letopisima," *Zbornik na Matidže srpske za slavistiku* 62 (2002), pp. 25–62.

120. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 249–50; Kotzageorgis, *H Αθωνική μονή Αγίου Παύλου*, p. 33. The last Branković donation to Saint Paul, from Hungary, seems to have been that of 3rd November 1495; D. Sindik, "Srpske povelje u svetogorskom manastiru Svetog Pavla," *Mešovita Gradja* 6 (1978), pp. 202–3; K. Mitrović, "Povelja despota Đorđa, Jovana i Angeline Branković manastiru Svetog Pavla," *Stari Srpski Arhiv* 6 (2007), pp. 209–20.

121. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 241–3 and 244–5. See also Turdeanu, "Legăturile românești," pp. 68–72, and particularly Crețeanu, "Traditions de famille." We should also mention here Neagoe's grants to the monastery of Saint Paul. Here too, Radu the Great was the first to donate to the house, and once again Neagoe and the Craiovescu family lagged behind their rival. Năsturel is tempted to see a transfer of patronage here, much like the transfer of Hilandar from Mara to Vlad the Monk; *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 241–3.

122. The former *protos* of Holy Mountain, Cosmas of Hilandar, was very active in the region and benefited from the favor of the Wallachian princes in particular. We have no information to indicate that Cosmas ever visited Moldavia; he is recorded however in Wallachia and Hungary, and together with the *starec* Josef of Hilandar persuaded the despots Djuradj and Jovan Branković, with their mother Angelina, to donate to Hilandar (in the year 7004 of Creation, thus between 1st September 1495 and 31st August 1496); M. Spremić, *Brankovići i Sveta Gora*, in *Druga kazivanja o Svetoj Gori* (Belgrade, 1997), pp. 93–8; Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, pp. 187–8; *Chilandar et les pays roumains*, p. 36.

123. Șt. S. Gorovei, "Maria Despina, Doamna lui Radu cel Frumos," *Analele Putnei* 2, nos. 1–2 (2006), pp. 145–52. Cazacu and Dumitrescu consider that the princess's entourage was composed of Southern Slavs; "Culte dynastique," 47. At the same time, 1474–1475, Jovan Crnojević, brother-in-law to Gergj Arianiiti Comnen, was leading the resistance to the Ottomans in Zeta and on the Albanian coast; J. V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor, 1994), p. 599.

124. M. I. Sabados, "Le don du voivode Ștefan Lăcustă de Moldavie à l'église des Serbes de Constantinople," *Zograf* 28 (2000–2001), pp. 139–42.

125. M. Cazacu, "Projets et intrigues serbes à la Cour de Soliman (1530–1540)," in G. Veinstein (ed.), *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps* (Paris, 1992), pp. 511–28; idem, "Stratégies matrimoniales et politiques des Cantacuzène de la Turcocratie (XVe–XVIe siècles)," *Revue des Études Roumaines* 19–20 (1995–1996), pp. 157–81.

126. Cazacu, "Stratégies," p. 167; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, p. 262; A. Eșanu and V. Eșanu, "O ipoteză privind căsătoria lui Alexandru, fiul lui Ștefan cel Mare," in A. Eșanu and C. Iordan (eds.), *Cultură și politică în Sud-Estul Europei* (Chișinău, 2011), pp. 8–15.

127. It has been thought that Ștefan Lăcustă was the son of Alexandru, son of Ștefan the Great; Șt. S. Gorovei, "Ștefan Lăcustă," in L. Șimanschi ed., *Petru Rareș* (Bucharest, 1978), pp. 161–74. I myself accepted this hypothesis; see Păun, "La Moldavie de Ștefan le Grand." Some historians admit the relation between Lăcustă and Alexandru but doubt that the latter was in fact the son of Ștefan the Great; M. Diaconescu, "Peșitorii nepoatei lui Ștefan cel Mare în 1517. Despre căsătoria lui Alexandru cu fiica lui Bartolomeu Drăgfi," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A. D. Xenopol"* 49 (2012), pp. 55–70; my thanks to the author for showing me the working draft of his article. Other historians again consider that Ștefan the Great had two sons named Alexandru: one who died in Moldavia in 1496, and was married to the daughter of voivode Bartolomeu Drăgfi of Transylvania, and another by some other relationship who was sent as hostage to the Porte, where he died and was buried in the Pammakaristos church, at the time the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This second Alexandru would then have been Lăcustă's father; see Al. Simon, "*Quello ch'è apresso el Turcho*. About a Son of Stephen the Great," *Anuario. Istituto Romeno di cultura e ricerca umanistica* 6–7 (2004–2005), pp. 141–69. M. Cazacu considers that this Alexandru married a kinswoman of Mihail Cantacuzino, father of "Shaytanoglu," "Stratégies," pp. 160–4. The same opinion is presented in D. I. Mureșan, "Bizanț fără Bizanț? Un bilanț," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 26 (2008), pp. 285–324, here 296–7. In my opinion there is not enough evidence to support Cazacu's hypothesis; further, some of his arguments have since been undermined. See also C. Cihodaru, "Pretendenții la tronul Moldovei între anii 1504–1538," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A.D. Xenopol" Iași* 14 (1977), pp. 105–8; D. I. Mureșan, "La visite canonique du patriarche Pacôme Ier dans les Principautés roumaines (1513) et le modèle davidique du sacre," in *Sfântul Voievod Neagoe Basarab*, pp. 25–63. Constantin Rezachevici does not comment on this aspect, but sees Lăcustă as a member of the Moldavian dynasty; *Cronologia*, pp. 567–75.

128. M. I. Sabados, "Sur un portrait votif inédit de Bistrița-Neamț," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 30, nos. 1–2 (1993), pp. 89–96. Lăcustă was assassinated by his own boyars (1540) and Kneajna, who died two years later, was given a burial befitting a princess in the monastery church at Bistrița, a princely foundation to which Ștefan Lăcustă's rival, Prince Petru Rareș, was uncommonly devoted. Some historians believe that Lăcustă himself was also buried there, which is not impossible. If indeed the case, this confirms that he was a member of the ruling dynasty, Rezachevici, *Cronologia*, vol. 1, pp. 574–5. It is also thought that Alexandru, putative son



of Ștefan the Great and father of Ștefan Lăcustă, is buried at Bistrița; see Gorovei, "Ștefan Lăcustă," p. 163; Rezachevici, *Cronologia*, vol. 1, pp. 574–5.

129. Lăpușeanul claimed to be the (illegitimate) son of Bogdan the One-Eyed (cel Chior, 1504–1517), himself a son of Ștefan the Great and the only Moldavian prince of this period for whom we have no proven connection with the Serbian world. However, Bogdan granted gifts to the Rila monastery, the most important center of Bulgarian monasticism; see St. Nicolaescu, "Un acoperământ de porfiră și aur dăruit Mănăstirii Rila din Bulgaria de Bogdan voievod, domnul Țării Moldovei. 10 martie 1511," *Arta și Arheologia* 9–10 (1933–1934), pp. 4–5; E. Turdeanu, "La broderie religieuse en Roumanie. Les étoles des XVe et XVIe siècles," *Buletinul Institutului Român din Sofia* 1, no. 1 (1941), p. 56. It has recently been proposed that he did the same for Kosinitsa, where Mara Branković is buried; Székely, "Pe marginea unei corespondențe." However, Bogdan's name does not feature in the monastery's memorial roll; Teoteoi, "Neagoe Basarab." Other authors hold that Bogdan financed building work at Saint Paul; G. Subotić, "Manastir Svetog Pavla," in *Kazivanja o Svetoj Gori* (Belgrade, 1995), pp. 114–42, here 136; Kotzageorgis, *Η Αθωνική μονή Αγίου Παύλου*, p. 33. It has also been stated that Maxim Branković was consecrated bishop in Moldavia during Bogdan's reign; L. Pilat, "Mitropolitul Maxim Brancovici, Bogdan al III-lea și legăturile Moldovei cu Biserica sârbă," *Analele Putnei* 6, no. 1 (2010), pp. 229–38; A1. Simon, "Descrerea Moldovei sub Bogdan III și 'ridicarea' Țării Românești sub Neagoe Basarab," in *Sfântul Voievod Neagoe Basarab*, pp. 431–61, here 432. The opposite opinion is presented by Mureșan, "La visite canonique," p. 37.

130. After Basarab's death (1482), Mara was considered by the Ottoman authorities the hereditary *ktetor* of the monastery, as indicated by a ferman delivered by Bayezid II in 1485; see V. Boškov, "Mara Branković v turskim dokumentima iz Svete Gore," *Hilendarski Zbornik* 5 (1983), pp. 189–214, here 206.

131. K. Mitrović, "Povelja Despota Đorđa Brankovića o prihvatanju ktitorstva ad Hilandarom. 1486, mart 20, Kupinik," *Stari srpski arhiv* 5 (2006), pp. 229–39, here 231 (original) and 232 (copy).

132. Idem, "Povelja Despotice Jelene Jakšić Manastiru Hilandar 1503, Juni 11, Budim," *Stari Srpski Arhiv* 7 (2008), pp. 195–203, here 197. See also Spremić, "Brankovići i Sveta Gora," *Æ* pp. 95–6.

133. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 130–1; *Chilandar et les Pays roumains*; Păun, "La Valachie et le monastère de Chilandar."

134. After the early death of Jovan Branković, his widow Jelena (daughter of Dimitrije Jakšić) married Ivaniša Berislavić, who thereby "inherited" the title; see Spremić, "Généalogie," p. 446.

135. For a general overview, see A1. Elian, "Legăturile Mitropoliei Ungrovlahiei cu Patriarhia de Constantinopol și cu celelalte Biserici ortodoxe (de la întemeiere până la 1800)," in idem, *Bizanțul, Biserica și cultura românească. Studii și articole de istorie*, V. V. Muntean ed. (Iași, 2003), pp. 141–80.

136. See mainly Gorovei and Székely, *Principes*; L. Pilat, "Autocefalia Mitropoliei Moldovei în secolul al XV-lea. Concept eclesiologic și realități politice"; idem, "Vizita Patriarhului Ioachim I și statutul Bisericii din Moldova la începutul secolului

al XVI-lea," both in idem, *Studii privind relațiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun și Patriarhia Ecumenică (secolele XIV–XVI)* (Iași, 2013), pp. 141–67 and 239–47.

137. D. I. Mureșan and P. Ș. Năsturel, "Du καθολικός βασιλεὺς à l'αὐθέντες καθολικός. Notes sur les avatars d'une idée politique," in E. Popescu, T. Teoteoi, and M. O. Cățoi (eds.), *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, vol. 6 (Bucharest, 2011), pp. 251–82, here 259, note 37. See also D. I. Mureșan, "Patriarhia ecumenică și Ștefan cel Mare. Drumul sinuos de la surse la interpretare," in V. V. Muntean ed., *În memoria lui Alexandru Elian. Omagiere postumă a reputatului istoric și teolog, la zece ani de la trecerea sa în veșnicie (8 ianuarie 1998)* (Timișoara, 2008), pp. 87–180; idem, "Le Mont-Athos aux XVe–XVIe siècles. Autour de quelques descriptions d'époque," in E. Băbuș, I. Moldoveanu, and A. Marinescu (eds.), *The Romanian Principalities and the Holy Places along the Centuries* (Bucharest, 2007), pp. 81–121. Although he takes over some conclusions from earlier research, this author has lost sight of Dionysia Papachryssanthou's warning about the situation after 1312: "Il faut se garder de penser que, le *prôtos* étant dorénavant sous la *dépendance spirituelle* du patriarche, il y eut un transfert de responsabilité de l'empereur sur la personne du patriarche [. . .] tous les privilèges de la Montagne restent inviolables," (my emphasis); see *Actes de Prôtaton*, ed. D. Papachryssanthou (Paris, 1975), p. 127. We may add here that some of the foreign (primarily Western) sources that the author uses are of only limited relevance.

138. See R. Clogg, "The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire," in B. Braude and B. Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, *The Central Lands* (New York, 1982), pp. 185–207; P. Konortas, "From Ta'ife to Millet: Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community," in Ch. Issawi and D. Gondicas (eds.), *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 169–179.

139. Reference is made here to the *berat* delivered by Bayezid II, in 1483. The document is published by E. A. Zachariadou, *Δέκα τουρκικά έγγραφα για την Μεγάλη Εκκλησία (1483–1567)* (Athens, 1996), pp. 157–62 (original and Greek translation); Salakides, *Sultansurkunden*, pp. 33–8 (original and German translation), 48–65 (commentary).

140. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques et politiques*, pp. 170 ff, 192, 419, 426–7.

141. It has been stated that the act of 1312 was confirmed and reinforced on 5th December 1498 by Patriarch Joachim I, proving that the Athonites were fully subordinate to the Great Church; Mureșan, "Le Mont-Athos"; idem, "Bizanț fără Bizanț?," p. 288. The story is actually more complicated. The *protos* Cosmas went unexpectedly to Constantinople and asked Patriarch Joachim I to "renew" the so-called "old *typikon*" of the Holy Mountain, thereby proving that he had an interest in this affair. As the texts of the *typikon* and the confirmation delivered by Joachim indicate, this interest was *not* to subordinate the Athonite community to the Patriarchate, but rather to obtain official confirmation of the privileges and broad autonomy the Athonites already possessed *de facto*. As has been convincingly shown, the "old *typikon*" that Cosmas presented to the Patriarch and that the latter finally confirmed was in fact a forgery; it is hard to believe that anyone would produce a forgery to claim inferior



status. Besides, it is not sure at all that the patriarchal act of 1498 renewed the 1312 *typikon* but rather a so-called *typikon* of 1394; see D. Papachryssanthou, *Η διοίκηση του Αγίου Όρους* (1600–1927) (Athens, 1999), pp. 14–6; D. G. Apostolopoulos, *Ὁ Ἱερὸς Κῶδιξ τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως στὸ Β' μιστὸ τοῦ ΙΕ' αἰῶνα. Τὰ μόνα γνωστὰ σπαράγματα* (Athens, 1992), pp. 163–5; idem, “Τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος στὰ σωζόμενα πατριαρχικά ἔγγραφα τῆς πρώτης μετὰ τὴν Ἀλωση περιόδου (1454–1500)”; K. Chryssochoides, “Παραδόσεις καὶ πραγματικότητες στὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος στὰ τέλη τοῦ ΙΕ' αἰῶνα καὶ στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ ΙΣΤ' αἰῶνα,” both in *Ὁ Ἄθως στους 140–160 αἰῶνες* (Athens, 1997), pp. 89–98, here 96–8, and pp. 99–147, here 99–108, respectively; D. G. Apostolopoulos, “Σχέσεις τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως με τὴν Ἀθωνικὴ κοινότητα: Ἀπὸ τὴν κρίση στὴν εξομάλυνση,” in *Τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος στὸν 15ο καὶ 16ο αἰῶνα*, pp. 193–8. It also should be noted that the authority of the *protos* himself had declined and “remained weak throughout the fifteenth century,” which means that monasteries had a quite important degree of freedom in their moves. The act of 1498 aimed precisely to strengthen the *protos*'s authority; Smyrlis, “Mount Athos in the Fifteenth Century,” p. 47.

142. Apostolopoulos, “Σχέσεις,” pp. 46–7. It has been pointed out that the Athonites “generally adapted their message of mutual legitimation and tacit alliance, their political loyalties and their outward social values to suit those of the conqueror”; J. C. Alexander (Alexandopoulos), “The Lord Giveth and the Lord Taketh Away: Athos and the Confiscation Affair of 1568–1569,” in *Ὁ Ἄθως στους 140–160 αἰῶνες*, pp. 149–200, here 150. See also *Actes de Lavra*, vol. 4, *Études historiques. Actes serbes, complements et index*, P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, and D. Papachryssanthou (eds.), (Paris, 1982), p. 46.

143. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques et politiques*, p. 350. Tellingly, the Patriarchate played no part whatsoever in the case of the confiscations of 1568/69; see Alexander, “The Lord Giveth”; A1. Fotić, “The official explanations for the confiscation and sale of monasteries (churches) and their estates at the time of Selim II,” *Turcica* 26 (1994), pp. 33–54.

144. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques et politiques*, p. 368.

145. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques et politiques*, p. 364. The same obtains where any kind of conflict occurred between the church hierarchies of different confessions, or in the case of property disputes between laymen and clergy, despite whatever spiritual sanctions the Great Church threatened; pp. 369 and 379. The obvious example is that of Maria-Jelena, niece of Mara Branković; see V. Demetriades and E. A. Zazahariadou, “Serbian Ladies and Athonite Monks,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 84 (1994), pp. 35–53; I. Beldicea-nu-Steinherr, “Les illusions d’une princesse. Le sort des biens de Mara Branković,” in S. Prător and Ch. K. Neuman (eds.), *Frauen, Bilder und Gelehrte. Studien zu Gesellschaft und Künsten im Osmanischen Reich* (Istanbul, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 43–59; Dj. Tošić, “Posljednja bosanska kraljica Mara (Jelena),” *Zbornik za Istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine* 3 (2002), pp. 29–60, here 55–59. See also A1. Fotić, “Non-Ottoman Documents in the Kādis Courts (*Mâlōviya*, Medieval Charters): Examples from the Archive of the Hilandar Monastery (15th–18th c.);” E. Kolovos, “Negotiating for State Protection: *Çiflik*-Holding by the Athonite Monasteries (Xeropotamou Monastery, Fifteenth–Sixteenth

Century),” both in C. Imber, K. Kiyotaki, and R. Murphey (eds.), *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*, vol. 2 (London and New York, 2005), pp. 63–75 and pp. 197–211, respectively.

146. Konortas, *Les rapports juridiques et politiques*, pp. 372–5.

147. Tellingly, in one such *firman* of 1589, the travelling monks (*taxidiotai*) are included in the category of “state tax collecting”; A1. Fotić, “Athonite Travelling Monks and the Ottoman Authorities (16th–18th Centuries),” in *Perspectives on Ottoman Studies. Papers from the 18th Symposium of the International Committee of Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Studies (CIEPO) at the University of Zagreb 2008*, E. Čaušević, N. Moččanin, and V. Kursar (eds.), (Berlin, 2010), pp. 157–65, here 158–9.

148. The number of works devoted to this topic is considerable; I will mention only a few. The “imperial idea” is argued by P. Ș. Năsturel, “Considérations sur l’idée impériale chez les Roumains,” *Byzantina* 5 (1973), pp. 395–413; D. Năstase, *L’héritage impérial byzantin dans l’art et l’histoire des Pays Roumains* (Milan, 1976); idem, “L’idée impériale dans les Pays Roumains et ‘le crypto-empire chrétien’ sous la domination ottomane. Etat et importance du problème,” *Σύμμεικτα* 4 (1981), pp. 201–51; idem, “La survie de l’Empire des Chrétiens sous la domination ottomane. Aspects idéologiques du problème,” in *Atti del III Seminario internazionale di studi storici Da Roma alla Terza Roma* (Rome, 1983), pp. 459–471; idem, “Imperial Claims in the Romanian Principalities from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries. New Contributions,” in L. Cloucas (ed.), *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1988), pp. 185–224; idem “Ștefan cel Mare împărat,” *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 16 (1998), pp. 65–102; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*; D. I. Mureșan, “De la Nouvelle Rome à la Troisième: le rôle des Principautés Roumaines dans la transmission de l’idée impériale,” in A. Castaldini (ed.), *L’eredità di Traiano. La tradizione istituzionale romano-imperiale nella storia dello spazio romeno* (Bucharest, 2008), pp. 123–67. For different points of view, see Val. A1. Georgescu, “L’idée impériale byzantine et les réactions des réalités roumaines (XIVe–XVIIIe siècles),” *Byzantina* 3 (1971), pp. 311–39; Pippidi, *Tradiția*; R. G. Păun, “L’idée impériale et les anciennes chroniques roumaines. Repères pour une histoire impossible,” *Méditerranées* 26–27 (2001), pp. 175–211; Șt. Andreescu, “L’idea imperiale nei Principati romeni. Una teoria e la sua critica,” in *L’eredità di Traiano*, pp. 167–74. Recently a difference has been emphasized between κτίτωρ (“fondateur”) and κτήτωρ (“propriétaire”) and stated that: “Aucun souverain post-byzantin ne pouvait se poser toutefois ni en tant que ‘fondateur’ ni en tant que ‘propriétaire’ de tout l’Athos. Une troisième acception du terme *ktetor* se dégage donc à cet endroit, qui est celle plus générale de ‘patron’ de tel lieu saint ou de telle institution ecclésiastique”; see D. I. Mureșan and P. Ș. Năsturel, “Du καθολικὸς βασιλεὺς,” pp. 279–80 and note 125. I agree with this distinction, although it is not clear at all what “patron” means in this context. Whatever the case may be, the two authors insist on Neagoe Basarab’s (and on all the Wallachian princes’) patronage over the entire Mount Athos.

149. D. Năstase, “Le patronage du Mont Athos au XIIIe siècle,” *Cyrrilomethodianum* 7 (1983), pp. 71–87; idem, “La signification cachée des documents athonites,” *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32/2 (1982), pp. 257–267; idem, “Les débuts de la communauté œcuménique du Mont Athos,” *Σύμμεικτα* 6 (1985), pp.



251–314; idem “‘Necunoscut’ ale izvoarelor istoriei românești,” *Anuarul Institutului de istorie “A. D. Xenopol”* 30 (1993), pp. 491–5; Biliarsky, “Saint Constantin.”

150. The only independent source to say any such thing refers to Ștefan the Great, but this is not an official one; rather it is Western, a statement by the Venetian chronicler Marino Sanudo; see Șt. Andreescu, “Ștefan cel Mare ca protector al Muntelui Athos,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie “A. D. Xenopol” Iași* 19 (1982), pp. 652–3. On Ștefan as protector of the entire Athos, see, among others, I. Moldoveanu, “Sfântul Ștefan cel Mare, protector al Muntelui Athos,” in *Atlet al credinței*, pp. 157–79; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, pp. 47–9, 305–8; 390–1; Mureșan, “Le Mont-Athos,” p. 119.

151. Recent research has argued that when patronage over the monastery of Zographou was passed “des derniers Assenides aux Bogdănești” (i.e., the Moldavian rulers) this also meant that the Moldavian princes, especially Ștefan the Great, took over the Bulgarian “imperial idea”; Mureșan, “Zographou et la transmission.” This is not the place to expound all the author’s arguments; we will merely remark that in neither Alexandru Aldea of Wallachia’s charter of donation (9th February 1433), nor that of Ștefan II (26th May 1442), is Zographou called “the monastery of My Lordship”; see *DRH. B*, vol. 1, pp. 136–37, no. 74 and *DRH. A*, vol. 1, pp. 311–2, no. 221, respectively. On the latter charter, see Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 180–2. Strangely, Mureșan does not comment at all on the idea of the Serbian legacy in Moldavia argued by Cazacu and Dumitrescu (see “Culte dynastique,” especially pp. 28–30, 45–6), although he refers to this article elsewhere as a fundamental work unfairly ignored in Romanian historiography; see Mureșan, “Bizanț fără Bizanț,” p. 309, note 67.

152. Lemerle and Wittek, “Recherches,” pp. 424–6. I followed the transcription by Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, p. 196.

153. Lemerle and Wittek, “Recherches,” pp. 436–41 (23rd–31st May 1527).

154. Lemerle and Wittek concluded: “Ces princes valaques apparaissent donc comme les protecteurs héréditaires du monastère,” “Recherches,” p. 441. For the view that the sultans saw the voivode of Wallachia as an institutional role and were not interested in who occupied the throne at any given moment or from what branch of the dynasty a prince came, see Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos*, pp. 331–2.

155. Zachariadou, “Ottoman Documents,” pp. 8–10.

156. Salakides, *Sultansurkunden*, pp. 73–4 and 83–4. The inverted kommas the author uses in his translation of the Ottoman terms are telling.

157. Boškov, “Dokumenti Baezita II v Hilandaru,” pp. 138–9; Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, pp. 194–5; *Chilandar et les pays roumains*, pp. 43–4 (I cannot understand why Koutloumousiou and Hilandar are placed in the same category).

158. Boškov, “Dokumenti Baezita II v Hilandaru,” pp. 138–9; V. Boškov and D. Bojanić, “Sultanske povelje iz manastira Hilandara,” *Hilandarski Zbornik* 8 (1991), pp. 167–213, here 176 (15th–24th July 1513); Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, pp. 194–5. Süleyman the Magnificent confirmed the situation in 1523, but this time no particular name of a Wallachian prince was mentioned; Boškov, “Dokumenti Baezita II v Hilandaru,” p. 139.

159. A. Popescu (“Muntele Athos și românii—punctul de vedere otoman,” in I. Căndea, P. Cernovodeanu, and Gh. Lazăr (eds.), *Închinare lui Petre Ș. Năsturel la 80*

de ani [Brăila, 2003], pp. 151–8, here 155 and 157) to a great extent takes over the conclusions of Năsturel (*Le Mont Athos*, pp. 330–3), nevertheless emphasizing that no Romanian prince could assume the title attached to the Muslim rulers of Constantinople, i.e., that of successor to the Byzantine emperors, and that Romanian donations to Athos were only possible within the framework of Islamic law and in conformity with the Sultan’s will. Popescu does not use the Ottoman documents on Hilandar.

160. V. Barbu, Gh. Lazăr, and O. Olar, “Reforma monastică a domnului Matei Basarab,” *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 30 (2102), pp. 9–55, here 17. The authors state that “as Paul Lemerle, Eleni (?) Zachariadou and Nicoră Beldiceanu have convincingly shown, the Romanian princes were also ‘administrators and guarantors for the Athonite monasteries,’ a function which the Ottoman tax documents treat as equivalent to that of administrator for a religious foundation (*mutevvelli vaqf*).” I have shown above that Elisabeth (not Eleni!) Zachariadou claims quite the contrary. Lemerle and Wittek consider the wording of the document of 1491 “malheureusement trop vague pour qu’on puisse en déduire la situation juridique du voivode vis-à-vis de ‘son’ monastère” and advance the very cautious conclusion that: “S’il s’agit, dans le cas de Qutlumus, d’un *vaqf*, le voivode serait alors une sorte de *mutewelli* du monastère” (my emphasis), “Recherches,” p. 429. Beldiceanu seems more categorical and considers that the Wallachian princes acted in this respect as *mutewelli*; “En marge d’une recherche concernant les relations roumano-athonites,” *Byzantion* 50 (1980), pp. 617–23, here 620–2. However, if the first document published by Lemerle and Wittek clearly mentions that Koutloumousiou “depended” on the Wallachian prince, the second says nothing about the type of relation between the two; Lemerle and Wittek, “Recherches,” pp. 422 and 433–6. In any case, Beldiceanu overgeneralizes on a quite precarious ground. See also Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, p. 196, note 9; *Chilandar et les pays roumains*, p. 40.

161. For the significance of this sage, see Píppidi, *Tradiția*, pp. 24–7. A different opinion is expressed by Năstase “Sfințirea,” pp. 90–1.

162. I remind the reader that both the last Branković living in Hungary and some Athonite monks addressed the Russian monarchs as protectors of the Holy Mountain; see Fotić, *Sveta Gora*, pp. 207–8, and the documents published in S. M. Kashtanov, *Россия и гречески ј мур в XVI веке*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 2004).

163. When Neagoe Basarab was asked to intervene in the lawsuit between Koutloumousiou and Pantocrator, he acted in his capacity as patron of the first monastery and not as patron of the whole Athos. Tellingly, he took no decision in the matter but left the affair to the Athonite authorities to resolve; *Actes de Kutlumus*, pp. 166–9 (January 1518).

164. See Păun, “La Valachie et le monastère de Chilandar.”



## Chapter 11

### The Center of the Periphery

#### *The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia<sup>1</sup>*

Jelena Mrgić

The "center-periphery" model was introduced to historical research from economic studies during the second half of the last century, and it provided a new approach to this phenomenon. In regard to the Byzantine Empire, the term "center" applies in the first instance to Constantinople, as the Second Rome, the seat of the Emperor and the whole Christian *oecumene*. Besides its political, ideological, and cultural significance, the City was the highest ranking economic center, to which most of the resources were directed. The second ranking was Thessalonica, much closer to the interior of Central Balkans.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of historical geography studies of medieval Bosnia observe only the final results of a variety of intricate processes, stages of which are almost impossible to pinpoint, both in time and place. This is, of course, the consequence of extremely limited sources and the scarcity of the evidence they yield, along with their chronological and territorial inconsistency. In comparison to other European and non-European regions, historians of medieval Bosnia lack, to a greater or lesser extent, material from royal, feudal, and city archives. Missing are all population, settlement, and taxation records, while cartographic images and visual sources (manuscript illustrations and reliefs carved in *stećci* tombstones<sup>3</sup>) are pretty meager—to name just a few basic categories. One may well wonder to what extent it really is possible to comprehend and, further, to reconstruct this medieval society.

There is more than one way around this basic problem of how to compensate the overall lack of evidence and to make the picture more complete. There are several theoretical approaches with diverse analytical tools, concepts, and methods, which could provide new insights into political, social, economic, and cultural mechanisms, patterns and processes, and in the end, to achieve new scientific results.



On the nature of historical knowledge and how we come by it, Robin Collingwood once said: *All history is the history of thought*, that is, all of the past is the present re-thinking the past.<sup>4</sup> Two historical geographers extended this premise—*all historical geography is the history of thought with a bearing on human activity on land* (L. Guelke) and even more radical—*all geography is historical geography* (C. H. Darby). This interpretation points the fact that before they acted, humans had to have a system of theoretical approaches on which they organized their behavior in natural environment, resulting in actions or “forms” that are visible through the curtain of historical sources.<sup>5</sup> Beside recorded history, there is, however, the deep history of humankind, where natural and geo-sciences are involved in historical reconstruction.<sup>6</sup>

Historical geographers aim to understand, unravel and reconstruct the spatial behavior of individuals and communities, to discover the structure of their spatial organization, their system of evaluation of geographical space, including environmental, social and cultural preferences and values, decision-making processes and how certain society handled the outcomes of those decisions and actions. From a decennial distance, we now return to a paper, written in 2003, entitled “Rethinking the Territorial Development of the Mediaeval Bosnian State,” but with greater understanding, knowledge, skills, and experience, regarding regional historical geography of the mediaeval and early modern Bosnia. Some recent texts deal with more environmental history issues, closely connected to the problems of historical geography and its methodology.<sup>7</sup>

The lack of evidence forces us to hypothesize historical processes in comparison with similar societies, both in the immediate vicinity of Bosnia and further afield, as Marc Bloch has pursued and promoted in his studies. Further, historians apply a regressive approach, moving from documented results (“forms”) then backtracking to the past. From the standpoint of a scholar, the most important thing is to become an *omnivore* in regard to the methodology and types of sources, to use as many as one could think of in pursuit of the re-creation (or better yet, *la résurrection de la vie intégrale*, as Jules Michelet put it) of past societies and their environment.<sup>8</sup>

A prerequisite step would be to completely reject the prevailing notion of the medieval Bosnian state as a “special case,” a sort of totally unique political and social feature, because it is based almost exclusively on the phenomenon of its vague and obscure religious affiliation to the heretical Bosnian church. Furthermore, interpretations of this religious “organization” are still extremely biased and anachronous. Leaving these matters aside, medieval Bosnia proves to be a typical feudal state and society, without denying or depriving it of certain unique features. That said, and accepting the initial “ideal model” of a feudal state society with an agrarian pre-modern economy, further comparisons can be made.

First choice for *per analogiam* observations would be medieval Serbia, because of the similar geophysical composition, and original Slavic and Serbian population, the fact that had influenced the initial land colonization (*Landnahme*). This was based upon environmental preferences and evaluation of natural and cultural surroundings, and it induced development of settlement patterns and spatial organization, according to the social, economic and cultural concepts.<sup>9</sup> Second, after placing medieval Bosnia in a wider geographical, that is, regional context of the Central Balkans and Southeastern Europe, it seems obvious to investigate documented relations and the already observed influences of Bosnia’s neighbor—the Kingdom of Hungary, on its political, social, economic, cultural, and religious life.<sup>10</sup>

Third, in spite of the fact that prior to acquisition of the territory known today as Herzegovina, the Bosnian state was in a position of “a continental land-lock,” one cannot overlook the vicinity of Adriatic port communes of Dubrovnik, Split, and Zadar to Bosnia. These urban centers acted as mediators in *translatio* of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Mediterranean civilization and heritage to the Balkan hinterland. A dense road network emerged as early as in Illyrian times, later paved by the Roman Empire and its officials, such as Cornelius Dolabella, governor of Dalmatia province. Archaeological remains of several pre-Romanesque basilicas in Vrutci (near the source of the River Bosnia) and nearby Blažuj testify to strong cultural and economic connections with Adriatic towns, where the skilled craftsmen and stonemasons were hired. The process evolved in the opposite direction, too—girls and boys from Bosnia found employment as maids, servants, and apprentices in coastal towns. They were sometimes fleeing from hunger, sometimes forcefully taken away as *ancillae* and *servi* by slave lords (*robci*), on the pretext that they were “heretics.” Anyway, this medieval world was in constant motion, a fact that is often overlooked by historians.<sup>11</sup>

The place of medieval Bosnia within the boundaries of the history and civilization of the Byzantine “Commonwealth” is, needless to say, highly marginal, compared again to medieval Serbia. The territory itself presented an area without any geo-strategic, political, or economical significance to the Empire for most part of its millennium history (Map 1).<sup>12</sup> All written records of Bosnia in the Byzantine historical sources are already well known, providing little information, though disproportionally of high significance to Bosnian history. This scant evidence is chronologically and spatially scattered from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries, and shall be addressed briefly for the purpose of this text, together with evidence of different provenance.

The aforementioned “continentality” of Bosnia was an enduring feature of its history, from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, strongly influencing its development. A process of escaping from it could be observed, with phases of territorial thrusts toward the Adriatic coast and retreats, following the high



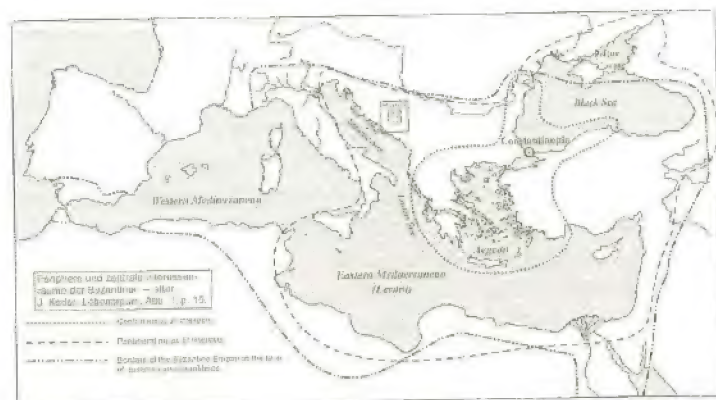


Figure 11.1 Position of medieval Bosnia in the context of the Byzantine Empire's areas of interests as demarcated by Johannes Koder (1984) Source: Created by Johannes Koder.

and low tides of the Bosnian state power. On the grounds of military superiority, the Grand Bosnian ban Matija (Stephen) Ninoslav (before 1233–ca. 1250) was summoned to Split and elected Count of its commune in 1244. This would be hard to achieve if he had not been the overlord of the whole territory lying between Bosnia and Split, connected with the Roman roads *Salona–Servitium*, and *Salona–Sirmium*. Soon afterwards, however, Bosnia began its political decline and eventually, fell into a period of feudal anarchy. As a result, the transitory areas between the Valley of Vrbas River and the Central Dalmatian coast were abandoned.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the geomorphologic composition of the land, its relief and vegetation, the inhabitants of Bosnia had probably shared some features of a “high-lander” mentality, comparable to, let us say, Central Wales or the Scottish Highlands.<sup>14</sup> In regard to Bosnian state composition, political and administrative organization, the “land” of Bosnia of the Kotromanić Dynasty was the state core, its “heart.” In contrast to Serbia, medieval Bosnia had never achieved a higher degree of government centralization, which would suppress the autonomous feelings and actions of provincial feudal lords in their *pays* (P. Vidal de la Blanche<sup>15</sup>). Gathered at the “stanak” (state assembly), representatives of the most powerful and influential Bosnian noble families with their own *Männerbunds* (“bratija”) had always succeeded in limiting the central authority of the ruler and very often exerted full control and appropriating regalian rights (*dominium eminens et iura regalia*) on their feudal domains. Those *barones regni* chose the Bosnian ruler at the “stanak” from the members of the royal dynasty of Kotromanić. The strength of the central government depended heavily on the personal authority of the ruler, as well as his wealth and the support of the loyal nobility. The Bosnian state

seemed, during most of its history, to balance on the brink of disintegration and feudal wars.<sup>16</sup>

Turning to the issue of medieval Bosnia's *spatial organization*, this implies first the military control over the territory, its mental (in the form of the “mental maps”) and administrative division from the largest to the smallest territorial units. Territoriality is the basic geographical expression of social power, binding space, and society. In fact, human spatial relations are the results of a complex interplay of multi-level relations both within the society and between society and its territory. An outline would be the following:

Bosnia (state, *rusag* < Hung. *ország*)

↓

“lands” (*pays*, *Landschaften*, *zemlje*, historical and geographical regions)

↓

“districts” (counties, *župas*)

↓

agrarian/rural and urban settlements.

It is necessary to have in mind that the process of building societal, political, and governmental structure began from the initial binding of rural settlements, connected in a network at the local level, with a nearby *refugium* and local market place. The second-level network would be that of “districts,” the third—the “lands.”<sup>17</sup>

Actually, the oldest Byzantine reference to Bosnia is at the same time as the first evidence of its spatial organization. In the well-known chapters of Constantine Porphyrogenitus's “De administrando imperio,” Bosnia is referred to as a “chorion” within the territory of the state termed “baptized Serbia.” There were two “inhabited towns” (*castra oecumena*)—Kotor and Desnik, still not precisely located in the area of fertile plains at Sarajevo and Visoko, in the upper flow of the River Bosna. Based on previously acquired knowledge in the reconstruction of spatial organization of the medieval Slavic and Serbian lands, it could be assumed that each of these two cities had the role of center of a “county,” in Slavic *župa*. But the unique reference to *chorion Bosona* probably implies that a more spacious territorial unit—a Vidalian *pays*, a medieval Slavic and Serbian *zemlja*—the “land” of Bosnia, was constituted at this time, composed of at least these two counties—Vrhbosna and Bosna at that time. This was the heart of the future state, its core-area.<sup>18</sup>

*Zemlja*—“land” denominated what is popularly termed *region* in geography, that is, a territorial entity, a geographically distinguished and homogeneous area which is to a point self-sufficient and can support its inhabitants from the local resources and production, thus economically exercising a semi-autarchy. Recognizing and organizing regions within a state has always



Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

When Isaac ascended the throne in September 1185 he was immediately faced with the Norman invasion of the Balkans; Dyrrachion and Thessalonike had already fallen and the Norman forces were marching unopposed towards Constantinople. The new emperor launched a massive counter-offensive which succeeded in swiftly expelling the invaders and subsequently negotiated an important alliance (or rather a renewal of the pre-existing alliance) with the Hungarians whereby he married the daughter of King Béla III, Margaret, and restored the *status quo ante* in the western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> The agreement not only secured peace in the empire's northwestern frontier, putting an end to Hungarian encroachment, but also resolved the question of Serbia, to which Béla formally renounced all claims.<sup>10</sup> The marriage, however, produced an unexpected result. Isaac had intended that the royal wedding be paid from the imperial estates, but demands were also made on Anchialos and other neighboring towns, provoking the local inhabitants to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when the emperor refused to enlist the local Vlach leaders, the brothers Theodore and Asen, in the imperial forces and grant them an estate producing a small income in the vicinity of the Haimos Mountains.<sup>12</sup> The two brothers enlisted the support of St. Demetrios to their cause in order to mobilize their compatriots and launched a full-scale rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Without opposition they extended their control over the regions outside the Haimos Mountains. Theodore assumed the name Peter, after Peter I who had ruled Bulgaria in the tenth century, and was crowned tsar. Having failed to capture Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, the rebels commenced their devastating raids.<sup>14</sup> Isaac responded with a series of counter-offensives in the following decade, but achieved limited success. The fighting seems to have mainly taken place in the regions extending from Sofia and Lovitzos (Loveč) to the west, to Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea in the east, and as far as Arkadiopolis in Thrace to the south.<sup>15</sup>

The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas

Great Bosnian Ban, that is, related by blood, which gave right to Prijezda to be elected (ca. 1250) for the next Bosnian ruler. According to Pope Gregory IX, Sibislav, the son of the former Bosnian ban Stephen, distinguished himself as a catholic among the heretics "quasi lilium inter spinas." So, one might think that an echo of the first fall of Constantinople in 1204 could be Kulin's disappearance, his dethroning in favor of a more pro-Western, that is, pro-Hungarian candidate, such as Stephen. In regard to state organization, the core-area of Bosnia was the "land" of Bosnia as the seat of the Grand Ban, the Grand Judge, the Grand *Kaznac*, and the Grand Bosnian *Voyvoda*. Undoubtedly based upon the demographic and economic rise, expressed in the military power of his state, ban Matija attempted the acquisition of the Adriatic coastal areas of Central Dalmatia and the immediate hinterland, thus providing the escape from the continental "semi-autarchy" of the Bosnian state. Gaining access to the Adriatic, that is, Mediterranean international trade and natural resources (salt, fish, wine, olive oil, finer textiles, and arms, lucrative goods, etc.), economically complementary with this continental ecological zone (fresh and dried meat, furs and hides, wax, grains, etc.), became a long-lasting political aim of Bosnian rulers.<sup>24</sup> Here we just want to add that economy, and trade in particular, of medieval Bosnia should be thoroughly reconsidered, since several outstanding studies and conference volumes have been published, regarding the Mediterranean basin, Byzantine Empire and beyond. They offer valuable and fresh interpretations, models and ideas which should be taken into account.<sup>25</sup>

At the time of ban Matija, there was an attempt to establish the Catholic Church more securely, with a Bosnian bishop and a number of parishes. According to the charter of the Hungarian King Béla IV (1235–1270), the Bosnian ban confirmed in 1244 the land possessions of the newly founded Bosnian Catholic bishopric. The list of Catholic churches and identification of settlement locations is hindered by the poor Latin transcription of Slavic settlement names. A note of caution: Catholic Church parishes have to be treated differently to socioeconomic and territorial units such as "districts" / *župas*, since the aim of parish networks was to encompass all members of the "flock," all Christians, regardless of their place of living. *Župas*, on the contrary, presented areas of milder climate, suitable for agricultural production, mainly of bread crops, fruits, and viticulture, and therefore their geographic location was determined by ecological conditions, placing them in the lowlands, up to 500–700 meters, depending on the average ground elevation.<sup>26</sup>

Toponyms are good evidence in historical geography research, and could help making the difference between these two territorial divisions visible.<sup>27</sup> The village of *Stomorine* has never been mentioned in medieval written sources, nor has any significant archaeological material ever been recovered on its territory. Nevertheless, its name is derived, as our distinguished linguist

Aleksandar Loma determined, from "Sancta Maria" / "Sveta Marija," that is, the church dedicated to the Holy Mary, Mother of God. *Stomorine* is situated on a (nowadays) barren and deforested plateau ca. 1000m of ground elevation on the right bank of the River Ljubinja, high above the fertile plain of Visoko; thus no place for agricultural activity with *župa* formation. However, the charter of 1244 stipulates "Vidgossa Lubinchi"—Vigoš(t)a Ljubinci, as a parish with a church. Again, we can turn to linguistic evidence—a small creek of *Sutmaj* (< *Sutmar* < *Sancta Maria*) joins River Ljubinja in the close proximity. Further, the remains of a medieval church with several necropolises of *steći* have been uncovered near the confluence of *Sutmaj* and Ljubinja, in the village of Gora.<sup>28</sup> Evidence thus points to the presence of a Christian population with the cult of Saint Mary, perhaps in the form of two churches, one dedicated to the holiday of her Birth (*Mala Gospojina*), the other to her Ascension (*Velika Gospojina*), placed in *Stomorine* and Gora. What is interesting to observe is the close proximity of the medieval mining site of lead ore named accordingly—*Olovo*, some five to ten kilometers from *Stomorine*. In addition to our direction of thought, we would like to remind the readers that Aleksandar Loma has proposed identification of Porphyrogenitus' *Desnik* with *Daštansko*, which was a mediaeval silver mine and settlement in the same area.<sup>29</sup> The cult of St. Mary was very strong in *Olovo*, where the Franciscan church was founded during the fourteenth century (prior to 1385/90), but more importantly, the annual fair (*panagyris* > *panadjur*) continued to be gathered on the holiday of the Ascension until modern times, long after the church was destroyed.<sup>30</sup>

This would have two important implications: one is to reconsider the existence and the organization of the orthodox (i.e., Orthodox and Catholic) Christian Church and secondly, the possibility of a much earlier presence of the (Catholic) Saxon miners in medieval Bosnia, that is, at least as early as in Brskovo in Serbia (*terminus post quem* 1246), if not a little earlier (ca. 1244). The development of mining in Bosnia should certainly be dated long before the first written record from 1339. The highest concentration of gold, silver, and lead mines was in the center of the state, in the "land" of Bosnia (*Kreševo*, *Hvojnica*/*Fojnica*, *Ostružnica*, *Busovača*, *Olovo*, etc.), where the medieval production followed the traces from the Roman era.<sup>31</sup> The lease (*emptio*) of these mines and trade in precious metals was the foundation of the Bosnian ruler's wealth, besides his land possessions, and also the main reason for merchants from Dubrovnik, Kotor, Split, Venice, and Zadar to make their business there, in the expectation of high income on the international, Mediterranean markets.<sup>32</sup>

The same charter from 1244 also reveals the names of proper territorial "districts" / *župas*, bearing the names of the River Bosnia's tributaries and situated in their valleys: *Vrhbosna* (*Vrh*—above, i.e., the area of Bosnia



River sources), *Lepenica*, *Lašva*, and *Brod* (environs of Zenica, named after the river ford), along with *Prača*—left tributary of the River Drina, *Uskoplje* in the valley of Vrbas, and *Neretva*—in the environs of today Konjic. The foundation of the Cathedral of St. Peter “in Brdo in Vrhbosna” implies that this location should be regarded as a central place with the highest number of Christians, otherwise it would be pointless to take on such an endeavor. Therefore, it should be sought in the area of Blažuj, on the ground of the highest concentration of archaeological sacral evidence and the settlement’s position at the juncture of three important roads leading from the Adriatic coast and entering here the field of Sarajevo. The fact that an early sixteenth-century Orthodox manuscript was written “in the place called Vrhbosanje, that is Sarajevo” should be interpreted as a late *translatio* of the name from the source of the River Bosnia to the east and the valley of the River Miljacka, where the foundations of the future *shehir Sarajevo* were laid only after the Ottoman conquest. The significance of Sarajevo and its rapid urban development toward the Valley of River Bosnia was so overwhelming at that time (1516), that it is quite understandable why the people (or at least, the copyist of this manuscript) had merged these two names. Though the central district—*župa Bosna* is not stipulated in written sources, there can be no doubt that it was positioned in the field of Visoko, where the highest concentration of Bosnian court places was, as revealed in the next phase (Map 2).<sup>33</sup> Serbian cultural influences were also present, as testified by an Orthodox liturgical manuscript, now preserved in Vatican. It was copied by Desoje, the same one as Desoje the “good scribe of the Ban” who wrote the charter of Matija Stephen Ninoslav in 1235/39, and this manuscript shows great similarities to Vukan’s Gospel.<sup>34</sup>

And so, by the thirteenth century, the “land” of Bosnia was organized as a geographical, political, and economic unit, and recognized as the “heart” of Bosnia. It consisted of a number of “counties” / *župas*—Bosna, Vrhbosna, Lepenica, Lašva, Brod, and Prača. During the late medieval period, *župa Trstivnica* emerged in the surroundings of two courts of the Bosnian Kingdom—Bobovac and Kraljeva Sutjeska. The royal domain—“il paese del re” or “*vilayet-i Kiral*” did encompass the former territorial unit, the “land” of Bosnia as its most precious foothold, but these two were not identical. Borders of the king’s domain changed as his power increased and decreased during feudal wars with the Bosnian *barones regni* in the first half of the fifteenth century. This was accompanied by excursions of the Hungarian and Ottoman armies, as well as political interventions. International trade routes developed to the south and southwest towards the Adriatic coast, and in the north towards the Hungarian Kingdom. During times of uncertainties, traffic diverted from arteries to capillary flows, that is, from main routes to subsidiary and back roads in Bosnia, as well as in other medieval states. There can be little doubt

that the northwest–southeast connection, known as “Bosanski drum” in Ottoman times when B. Kuripešić traveled, had not been present much earlier, binding the valley of Bosnia with the valleys of River Drina and Lim.<sup>35</sup>

Stjepan (Stephen) II Kotromanić (1318/22–1353), grandson of the Serbian King Stephen Dragutin, was of great significance to Bosnian medieval history. Judged by his achievements in state reorganization, centralization, and international *renomé*, he could be easily compared both to his senior, the Hungarian King Charles I Robert of Anjou (1301/10–1342), and to the Serbian King Stephen Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321). His strong and determined personality, wisdom, and skillfulness in pursuing long-term political goals enabled him to create a respectable state which permanently encompassed the Adriatic coast from the River Cetina to Dubrovnik, and, more loosely, the right bank of the River Sava. His authority as the supreme *dominus* (*gospodin*) of the Bosnian noblemen was indisputable. Like the Nemanjić rulers, Stjepan issued charters for his faithful vassals and for Dubrovnik in the form of his *grace* (*milost, gratia*). Hungarian and Western European influences could be detected more visibly in his time. His *intitulatio* was fashioned accordingly, composed of all the “lands” of Bosnia that he governed: Bosnia, Usora, Soli, Donji Kraji, and Hum. The marriage of his daughter Jelisaveta with the Hungarian King Luis I the Great (1342–1382) made Stjepan’s accomplishments in international politics quite distinguished.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, increased Byzantine influence is observable during Stjepan’s successor—ban, and from 1378, King Stephen Tvrtko I (1353–1391), not directly but through mediation of the medieval Serbian, that is, Nemanjić ideology and legacy. Seizing the crown of “Serbs and Bosnia,” he grounded his claim upon his dissension from King Dragutin’s daughter, further, the extinction of the main branch of Nemanjić Dynasty, and the fact that the Serbian throne was empty at that time. Tvrtko introduced Byzantine state officials, such as *protovestarius* (*comes camerarius*) and *logothet* (*cancelarius*, chancellor), but also *miles* (knight, *vitez*).<sup>37</sup>

The feudal process of state disintegration in historical and geographical regions and their lords began in ban Stjepan’s time, but came to its climax during the reign of Tvrtko and the civil war with his brother Vuk (Stephen) (1366–1373), and finally, soon after his death. The mightiest of all was Duke Hrvoje Vukčić, who played a significant role in the “game of throne” in Hungary, as well in Bosnia. The title of Duke/Herzog of Split (*dux Spaleti*) was granted to him by King Zsigmund’s opponent from Naples, and this signified Hrvoje’s independent rule in regard to the Bosnian King. One might also connect the origin of the title to Hrvoje’s seat in the town of Split, where the Byzantine *theme* of Dalmatia had its center. Nevertheless, some Byzantine influences could be detected in Hrvoje’s, rather strange, use of the title of “veliki protodjer” (μέγας πρωτόγερος, *megas protogeros*) of the Bosnian





Figure 11.2 Map was originally published in: J. Mrgić-Radojčić, "Rethinking." Source: Created by the author.

Kingdom. The term itself and the context is quite unique, therefore no firm conclusions can be made.<sup>38</sup>

In the autumn of the Balkan Middle Ages, Ottoman expansion and their making of the new world empire did reintroduce Bosnia into Byzantine historiography, but only briefly, to remark its final stage of sovereignty. King Stephen Tomaš (1443–1461) had turned to Rome and Catholicism, partly in the hope of acquiring significant military and financial help from the papacy against the advancement of the victorious Ottoman army. The other plan, to acquire huge land possessions of the Serbian Despots in Hungary by way of his son's marriage, was equally unsuccessful.<sup>39</sup>

In conclusion, it might be observed that the overall influence of the Byzantine Empire on the medieval Bosnian state was only sporadic on the grounds of the totally marginal position of the Central Balkan's region in imperial policy, and on the other hand, Bosnia's own political, social, and cultural development. Nevertheless, its place within the reach of the Empire's wings should be further evaluated.

## NOTES

1. I would like to express a special gratitude to Professor Johannes Koder (Vienna), for his more than useful comments and corrections, long-lasting support and challenges, which all improved the quality of this and other papers we wrote.

2. P. Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Polity Press, 1996). There is a huge amount of historiographical work on Constantinople, and we will refer only to the volume edited by Cyril Mango and Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople and its Hinterland* (Aldershot, 1995). See also: R. Radić, "Constantinople in Serbian medieval sources," in I. Iliev (ed.), *Proceedings of the 22nd international congress of Byzantine studies: Sofia, 22–27 August 2011. Vol. 1, Plenary papers* (Sofia, 2011), pp. 191–211.

3. See: J. Erdeljan, "Stećci—pogled na ikonografiju narodne pogrebne umetnosti na Balkanu" [Stećci—A View of the Iconography of Popular Funerary Art in the Balkans], *Zbornik Matice Srpske za Likovne Umetnosti* 32–33 (2003), pp. 107–19.

4. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, ed. Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 215ff.

5. L. Guelke, "Historical Geography and Collingwood's Theory of Historical Knowing," in Alan R. H. Baker and M. Billinge (eds.), *Period and Place—Research Methods in Historical Geography* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 189–96; A. R. H. Baker, "Reflection on the relation of historical geography and the Annales school of history," in Alan R. H. Baker and Derek Gregory (eds.), *Exploration in Historical Geography—Interpretative Essays* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 14ff.

6. D. Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009), p. 213ff.

7. J. Mrgić, "Rethinking the Territorial Development of the Medieval Bosnian State," *Istorijski časopis* 51 (2004), pp. 43–64; idem, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Patterns: A Case Study of Northern Bosnia," *Slidost-Forschungen* 65–66 (2006–2007 [2008]), pp. 50–86; idem, *Severna Bosna 13–16. vek* (Belgrade, 2008); idem, "Some Considerations on Woodland Resource in the Medieval Serbia and Bosnia," *Beogradski Istorijski Glasnik/Belgrade Historical Review* 1 (2010), pp. 87–101; idem, "Wine or rakı—The Interplay of Climate and Society in the Early Modern Ottoman Bosnia," *Environment & History* 17, No. 4 (November 2011), pp. 613–37.

8. M. Bloch, *La société féodale, t. I: La formation des liens de dépendance*, 1939; t. II: *Les classes et le gouvernement des hommes* (Paris, 1940); W. Norton, "Historical geography as the evolution of spatial form," in *Period and Place*, pp. 251–7; J. Michelet: "... l'histoire est une résurrection de la vie intégrale non pas dans ses surfaces, mais dans ses organismes intérieurs et profonds," Preface de *L'Histoire de France*, Tome I (Paris, 1880), p. iii.

9. J. Mrgić, "Srednjovekovni čovek i priroda," in S. Marjanović-Dušanić and D. Popović (eds.), *Istorijski život u srpskim zemljama srednjeg veka* (Belgrade, 2004), pp. 162ff.

10. A comprehensive study on Bosnian-Hungarian interrelations may be found in: D. Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti. Sveta kruna ugarska i Sveta krana bosanska 1387–1463* (Zagreb–Sarajevo, 2006).

Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

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*Bosna i evropska kultura* (Zenica, 1973), pp. 235–43; V. Stanković, *Manojlo Komnin, vizantijski car (1143–1180)* (Belgrade, 2008); A. Krstić, “Kučevo i Železnik u svetlu osmanskih deftera,” *Istorijski Časopis* 49 (2002), pp. 139–62.

24. M. Blagojević, “Srpske udeone kneževine,” *ZRVI* 36 (1997), pp. 45–62; idem, “Veliki knez i zemaljski knez,” *ZRVI* 41 (2004) pp. 293–318; Mrgić, *Donji Kraji*, pp. 35ff; eadem, “Rethinking,” pp. 54ff; S. Mišić, “Territorial division and representatives of local administration in the medieval Bosnian state,” *Beogradski Istorijski Glasnik/Belgrade Historical Review* 1 (2010), pp. 69–86; D. Kovačević-Kojić, *Trgovina u srednjovekovnoj bosanskoj državi* (Sarajevo, 1961); eadem, “Privredni razvoj srednjovekovne bosanske države,” *Prilozi za istoriju BiH* 1 (Sarajevo, 1987), pp. 89–190.

25. See for example: P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford–Malden, 2000); E. Kislinger, J. Koder, and A. Külzer (eds.), *Handelsgüter und Verkehrswege. Aspekte der Warenversorgung im östlichen Mittelmeerraum (4. bis 15. Jahrhundert)*, Akten des Internationalen Symposiums Wien, 19–22. Oktober 2005 (Vienna, 2010); C. Morrisson (ed.), *Trade and Markets in Byzantium* (Washington, D.C., 2012). We express our gratitude to Prof. Johannes Koder, for kindly informing us on this publication and for sending his text—“Regional Networks in Asia Minor during the Middle Byzantine Period—An Approach” from this volume, pp. 147–76. In the same volume, A. Laiou treated the Balkans’ regional networks and connections with Constantinople and Thessaloniki (pp. 125–46), while R. W. Dorin dedicated his paper to Adriatic trade networks (pp. 235–80).

26. For an overview of literature concerning župa, see: Mrgić, “Rethinking,” pp. 47–8, n.10; discerning Catholic parishes from territorial units, see M. Blagojević, “Severna granica bosanske države u XIV veku,” in *Bosna i Hercegovina od srednjeg veka do najnovijeg vremena* (Belgrade, 1995), pp. 59–76.

27. See, for example: P. Soustal, “Überlegungen zur Rolle der Toponyme als Quelle für die historische Geographie,” in K. Belke, F. Hild, J. Koder, and P. Soustal (eds.), *Byzanz als Raum. Zu Methoden und Inhalten der historischen Geographie des östlichen Mittelmeerraumes* (Vienna, 2000), pp. 209–22; idem, “Place Names as Sources for Migration and Settlement: Continuity and Change in Byzantine Chalkidiki,” *Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie* 18 (2009), pp. 177–83.

28. A. Loma, Sutelica, *Istorijski Glasnik* (1987), pp. 9ff; *Archaeological Lexicon of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo, 1988), pp. 15, 48.

29. Idem, “Sprachgut,” pp. 108–9. Daštansko was recorded as the silver mine in the earliest Ottoman source from 1468; A. Handžić, “Rudnici u Bosni od druge polovine XV vijeka do početka XVII,” *Prilozi za istoriju BiH* 2 (Sarajevo, 1987), pp. 7–37.

30. M. S. Filipović, *Varošica Olovo s okolinom* (Belgrade, 1934).

31. See the latest results concerning Roman mining and skilled labor force colonization in the region of Olovo, in: A. Loma and S. Loma, “Dva srednjobosanska toponima—Solun, Labun i topografski dinamizam rimske Dalmacije,” *Onomatološki prilozi* 21 (2011), pp. 1–14.

32. On the issue of Saxon immigration, see: J. Mrgić, “Some Considerations on Woodland Resource in the Medieval Serbia and Bosnia,” *Beogradski Istorijski Glasnik/Belgrade Historical Review* 1 (2010), pp. 87–101. Traces of migration of

skilled labor force, Saxon miners and their slavized descendants, with knowledge and technology transfer, M. S. Filipović detected in the region of Borovica, in the same mining rever as Daštansko and Olovo. It was recorded as a silver mine in the earliest Ottoman sources (1468), but this ethnographer observed how in 1928 the inhabitants of Borovica were regarded as special by their neighbors, since they had lived so secluded and kept to themselves. He suggested that perhaps they were descendants of old inhabitants, even Saxons judging from the preserved mining terminology (orti, kram), or that they had originally come from Duboštica, another medieval mining center in this area—“Borovica,” *SEZ—Naselja i poreklo stanovništva* 26 (1930), pp. 591–613; on Duboštica—K. Jireček, “Trgovački putevi i rudnici Srbije i Bosne u srednjem vijeku,” *Zbornik Konstantina Jirečeka* 1 (Belgrade, 1959), p. 263, n. 160; D. Kojić-Kovačević, *Gradska naselja srednjovekovne bosanske države* (Sarajevo, 1978), p. 81; on Ottoman records: A. Handžić, “Rudnici u Bosni od druge polovine XV vijeka do početka XVII,” pp. 7ff.

33. S. Trifković, “Sarajevsko polje,” *SEZ—Naselja i poreklo stanovništva* (Beograd, 1908); V. Skarić, *Sarajevo i njegova okolina od najstarijih vremena do austro-ugarske okupacije* (Sarajevo, 1937, 1987); D. Kovačević-Kojić, “O srednjovekovnom trgu na mjestu današnjeg Sarajeva,” *Zbornik FF u Beogradu* 11-1 (1970), pp. 353–62; P. Anđelić, “Srednji vijek,” *Visoko i okolina kroz historiju* I (Visoko, 1984), pp. 183–310; B. Zlatar, *Zlatno doba Sarajeva (XVI stoljeće)* (Sarajevo, 1996).

34. Lj. Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma* I-1 (Belgrade, 1929), p. 6; Lj. Stefovski-Vasiljev, “Novi podatak o Vatikanskom srpskom jevanđelistaru XIII veka,” *Zbornik Vladimira Mošina* (Beograd, 1977), pp. 141–2; J. Maksimović, “Umetnost u doba bosanske srednjovekovne države,” pp. 54–5.

35. P. Anđelić, *Bobovac i Kraljevska Sutjeska* (Sarajevo, 1973); P. Živković, *Tvrtko II Tvrtković: Bosna u prvoj polovini XV stoljeća* (Sarajevo, 1981); D. Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*; K. Jireček, *Trgovački putevi*; G. Škrivanić, *Putevi u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji*; Mrgić, *Donji Kraji*, pp. 281ff (Kuripešić’s and other itineraries with the map); eadem, *Severna Bosna*, pp. 350ff, with a map.

36. On the content of the terms “milost” and “gospodin,” see: M. Blagojević, *Državna uprava*, pp. 64–72; Mrgić, *Donji Kraji*, pp. 49ff. Jelisaveta seemed to share some of her father’s strong personality and she would not have given away the reins of Kingdom after becoming a widow in 1382; P. Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary 895–1526* (London–New York, 2001), pp. 195ff.

37. V. Ćorović, *Kralj Tvrtko Kotromanić* (Beograd, 1925); S. Ćirković, *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države*; M. Blagojević, *Državna uprava*.

38. Mrgić, *Donji Kraji*, pp. 102ff. One direction of thought would be that it was such an exclusive title, just “tailored” for Hrvoje’s outstanding ambitions.

39. J. Radonić, “Kritovul, vizantijski istorik XV veka,” *Glas SKA* 138 (1930); R. Radić, “Bosna u istorijskom delu Kritovula s Imbrosa,” *ZRVI* 43 (2006), pp. 141–54; D. R. Reinsch, “Kritobulos of Imbros—learned historian, Ottoman raya and Byzantine patriot,” *ZRVI* 40 (2003), pp. 197–211; J. Mrgić, “Poslednja dva Kotromanića i Despotovina,” in M. Spremić (ed.), *Pad srpske Despotovine* (Belgrade, 2011), pp. 195–201.



*Part III*

**AFTERMATH: BETWEEN TWO  
EMPIRES, BETWEEN TWO ERAS**

## Chapter 12

### Before and After the Fall of the Serbian Despotate

#### *The Differences in the Timar Organization in the Serbian Lands in the Mid-Fifteenth Century*

Ema Miljković

The Serbian lands came within the scope of the Ottoman conquering plans as early as the 1370s. Although the Battle of Kosovo in June 1389 represents one of the milestones in Serbian medieval history, it was not, contrary to popular view, the end of the independent Serbian state. The Despotate, a successor of the Serbian Empire and Moravian Serbia, survived for seventy more years, experiencing a cultural and political renaissance in the first half of the fifteenth century before it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1459. However, even before that date, the introduction of Ottoman institutions had begun in those provinces of the former Serbian Empire that had fallen under Ottoman rule.

#### I

The *timar* system represented one of the most important institutions of Ottoman society. Although originally not Ottoman, the *timar* system reached its full shape and originality in the Ottoman state, where three phases of its development can be identified:

1. The establishment of the *timar* system, during the beginning of the Ottoman state;



2. The Classical period of the *timar* organization, which began with the rule of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror and lasted to the end of the sixteenth century (some argue that this phase ends with the death of the sultan Süleyman the Magnificent in 1566); and
3. The phase of decline up until the *timar* system was completely abrogated in 1831.<sup>1</sup>

The originality of the *timar* system when compared with its contemporary feudal system in Western Europe was in the land ownership. In the Ottoman Empire, the land ownership system included three categories: the *harach*, the *ushur*, and the *miri* lands.<sup>2</sup> Almost all land in southeastern Europe belonged to this third category and that was the foundation of the *timar* system. According to that concept, all land was owned by the sultan, as personification of the State and the ultimate authority; he had the right to dispose of it as he wished, resulting in the complete annulment of the private ownership of land. However, even within the *miri* lands there existed the categories of *mulk* and *vaqf*, which were contradictory to the above-mentioned principle; annulment of those categories, was, however, the essence of the land reforms undertaken by Mehmed II the Conqueror.<sup>3</sup>

Roughly, the estates in the Ottoman Empire were classified as *timars*, *zeamets*, and *hasses*, depending on their revenue. The highest annual revenue from the *timar* was 19.999 *akches*, and it was given to the *sipahis* who had in return to fulfill their military duties, as well as to maintain the internal security and control of the population living on the *timar*. The revenue from the *zeamet* was ranging from 20.000 to 99.999 *akches* and it was given to functionaries of medium rank, such as *alay beg*, *timar kethude*, *timar defterdari*, *divan notars*, and *çauş*. The revenue from the *hass* was over 100.000 *akches* and beside the sultan himself, it was given to the highest state administrative and military functionaries, such as *vesirs*, *belgerbegs*, *sanjaks*, *defterdars*, and *nişancis*.<sup>4</sup> Due to this organization, the *sipahi* units represented a well-equipped territorial cavalry, which was paid from the annual revenues of the *timars*, as well as from war loot.<sup>5</sup>

The Ottoman state, even during its early Anatolian stage, had been organized in the so-called *uc*, that is, border regions, with highly concentrated military and administrative authority, reflected through multi-level *timar* tenure, as well as through institutions of the feudal servants or protégées, linked to the commander of the border region. The border region of Isa-beg Ishaković (Zvečan, Jeleč, Ras, Sjenica, Tetovo, and Skopje) provides a typical example of this organization. Where there was a two-tiered structure, Isa-beg stood at the highest tenure level, and on the second level were the members of his family; in the case of a three-tiered structure, Isa-beg was again on the highest level, on the second were his servants of higher rank, such as *subaşı*, and on

the third level were his servants of lower ranks. The largest number of *timars* with two- and three-level systems of tenure was registered in the year 1455 in the *nahiye* of Kalkandelen (Tetovo), while at the *nahiye* of Sjenica, which was part of Isa-beg fiefs as well, no multi-level *timar* tenure was registered.<sup>6</sup> Examples of border regions of this new type is the Sanjak of Smederevo (established in 1459) and the Sanjak of Bosnia (established in 1463), where such relations had not been observed.

The institution of *timar* in the Ottoman Empire did not presume the territorial integrity of the fief, since the *timars* of certain *sipahis* were often composed of villages situated far away from each other with the settlements between them belonging to *timars* of other *sipahis*. The *timar* was composed and determined according to the revenue granted to each *sipahi* for his service.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that the *timar* was a fiscal and not a territorial concession. For example, in the census book for the region of Braničevo dated 1467, a *timar* was registered to a holder named Hamza, son of Doğan, and consisted of the villages of Svinje and Kruševica, located in the district of Ždrelo, and also the village of Sladince in the district of Pek.<sup>8</sup>

The *timar* holders were obliged to live in one of the villages of their *timar*. In the case of war, one tenth of them stayed behind and did all the work for those who participated in the campaign. In addition, they were obliged to provide the warriors with food, as well as to see to the land cultivation. Those *timar* holders who were part of the fortress garrisons, due to their specific service, did not have the obligation to live on their own *timar*; they took care of their land through the popular chieftains, *knezs*, and *primikurs*. Each *sipahi* had, on his *timar*, one piece of land for their own usage (so called *hassa* land), which could be given for cultivation to someone else, with a rent of one quarter of the production, or under *tapi*. The *sipahi* replacing him had the right to reconsider the *tapi*, to give it again under the same conditions, to change the conditions or to revoke it completely.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest preserved census book for any of the Serbian provinces that came under Ottoman rule is the register of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica, concluded during the first reign of Mehmed II (1444–1446). This census book presents the register of one of the temporary Ottoman administrative units, which had existed before the definite fall of Serbia (1459) and Bosnia (1463) to the Ottoman rule. The census book in question is the copy made in the Ottoman capital, not the original material registered in the field, which is clear from the numerous notes written in the margins of the book. These notes are of immense importance, since they make it possible to reconstruct the essence of the *timar* system in the Balkans in its early stage, during the 1440s and 1450s, before the land reform performed by Mehmed II. By analyzing the data given in this census book and by their comparison to data from later epochs, it is possible to trace the main stages of the Ottoman *timar* system and to identify



adjustments and solutions that suited the central government best. Similar to the border region of Isa-beg Ishaković, registered in 1455, the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica were established as border regions of the older type. However, like the region of Sjenica, mentioned above, the *timar* system in those regions was not based on the multi-level *timar* tenure.<sup>10</sup>

## II

The majority of the *timars* registered in the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica during the 1440s were accompanied by the note "given from the *Despot's tahvil*."<sup>11</sup> The note means, as is clearly stated by the editors of this important document, that these regions were given back on the occasion of the return of Mara Branković to Serbia in 1451.<sup>12</sup> Those regions had been reconquered by the Ottomans as early as 1453.<sup>13</sup>

The *timar* was not given permanently, nor could it be automatically inherited. The tenure of the *timar* was conditioned with service, which could be administrative or religious, but was most often military. In cases in which the *timar* holder had not satisfied the demands of his service or did it poorly, he could lose his *timar*, without any other additional punishment. At the same time, a *timar* holder who managed to gain prominence might receive additional revenue (*teraki*). The composition and revenue from the *timar* was linked to its holder and depended on his personal position, authority, and activities. The *timar* would not have been automatically inherited by the person who succeeded the previous *sipahi* in the particular service.<sup>14</sup> However, the abundant remarks noted in the register for the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica from the 1440s offer a slightly different picture. In several cases it is mentioned that the *timar* was inherited by an under-age son. His service was performed by *cebelular* (armored companions), which varies from the principle mentioned above, strictly applied after the year 1451. Possibly, the hereditary principle was changed later in order to achieve the greater efficiency and to avoid possible misuses. Among *timars* awarded to underage heirs is the example of deceased Yusuf, son of Saruça Asoĝlan. A note in the records reads that the *timar* "is now given jointly to the sons of the above-mentioned Yusuf: Uruç, Hacı, and Muhamedi. They hold it jointly and jointly participate in the campaigns alternatively; according to the berat their replacements take part in the campaigns."<sup>15</sup>

Along with the *timar* of a certain Hasan that encompassed five villages and two *mezraas*, with a total income of 6,259 *akches*, it was noted: "Hasan, of his own free will, transferred his *timar* to his son Hacıb; he was given the berat by our padishah. It was again confirmed to Hacıb, from the *tahvil* of the Despot."<sup>16</sup>

This census book also registered the *timar* hold of a certain Doĝan's daughter, who had died in the meanwhile. Thus, the *timar* had been given to someone else. This is one of the rare examples when a female was given the *timar* concession.<sup>17</sup>

In another example, the census book for the border region of Isa-beg Ishaković notes that the fief hold (part of his *hass* tenure) of his wife, consisted of seven villages (a total of 606 houses) in the *vilayet* of Kalkandelen (Tetovo). Her registered income was relatively high (68,038 *akches*).<sup>18</sup> In the younger census book there is no mention of the female *timar* holders.<sup>19</sup>

In the analyzed census book for the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica from 1444/1445, out of the total number of 74 *timars*, 8 (11 percent) were held by Christian *sipahis*.

If we compare this number with the number of the Christian *sipahis* in the Sanjak of Smederevo some thirty years later, immense differences can be seen. According to the register for the *Sanjak* of Smederevo from 1476, 48 percent of the total number of *timars* in that region was held by Christian *sipahis*. We presume that such an increase in the number of Christian *sipahis* within the Ottoman *timar* system is linked to the establishment of the new type of border region. The *Sanjak* of Smederevo represents a perfect example of the border region of the new type with its main concept the mass inclusion of the local population into the Ottoman military and auxiliary forces.<sup>20</sup>

The census book for the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica registered the transfer of *timar* rights from a Christian *timar* holder to a Muslim one. Thus, the *timar* which consisted of parts of the villages of Zobnice, Dragovci, and Mačišta that had been previously assigned to a certain Vlk and his brother Mrkša, was assigned to Mahmud from Vidin, because the first *timar* holder "had remained in the Despot's land," as was noted by the census clerk.<sup>21</sup> The *timar* of a certain Vlkoslav, who had died in the meantime, was

Table 12.1 The Christian *sipahis* in the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica in 1444/1445

<i>Timar Holder</i>	<i>Villages</i>	<i>Parts of Villages</i>	<i>Mezraas</i>	<i>Houses</i>	<i>Widows</i>	<i>Income</i>
Vlk and Mrkša	1	3	1	34		2257
Ivča, martolos	1			6		450
Stepan, paša's son-in-law	2			34	4	2523
Jovan	3			57	1	6127
Vlkosav	1			17	2	1253
Silojan The Metropolitan	3			52		4245
Stanče	1			12	1	1456
Priježda	1			35	6	3250
Total:	13	3	1	247	14	21561



given to Yusuf, who had converted to Islam.<sup>22</sup> In some cases, however, the *timars* were transferred from Muslim to Christians. There is a note related to the *timar* of *tüfekçi* Karaca, that the village called Bratovica should have been taken from his *timar* and registered to the "pasha's relative called Grgur Konic/or Konjić."<sup>23</sup> Likewise, a certain Ivča the martolos had been given the *timar* previously hold by *asoĝlan* Ali.<sup>24</sup>

The *timar* holder in this region was also registered as the Metropolitan Siloyan, "the pasha's man" or "pasha's relative."<sup>25</sup> This *timar* consisted of three villages with 52 houses and one *mezraa*, which was added later, with a total income of 4,245 *akches*.<sup>26</sup>

The later census book for Serbian lands did not register the Metropolitans or any other church dignitaries as *timar* holders.<sup>27</sup>

As in the other Serbian regions that had become the part of the Ottoman state, there were immense differences between the income of Muslim and Christian *timar* holders. Thus, in the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica the highest recorded income for Muslim *timars* was 16,056 *akches* and was assigned to Sagrak, servant of Ismail, while the lowest income of all *timars* in this region held by Muslims was assigned to Gedik Ali (292 *akches*). As the income was in direct relation to the performed service, it appears that Christian *sipahis* could not obtain the highest positions within the Ottoman military hierarchy.

The notes on the margins of the census book also shed light on the reasons for taking away *timar* concessions. For example, beside the register of the

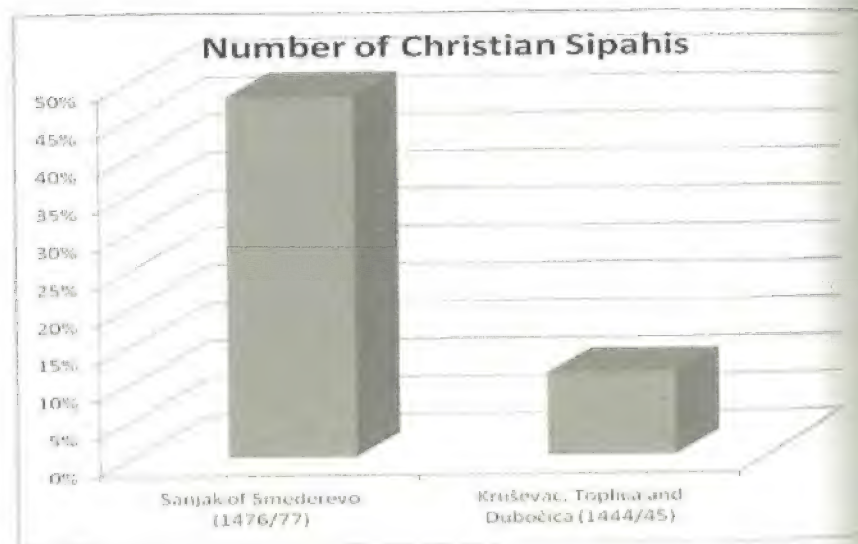


Figure 12.1

### Confessional structure of the sipahis (Kruševac, Toplica and Dubočica)



Figure 12.2

*timar* of Musa, son of the *kapıcı* Ismail, the following comment was noted: "The sanjak-beg wrote a letter stating that he [Musa, E. M.] had not registered the haraj of the reaya from the village of Stubica; haraj had not been taken; thus the *timar* had been taken away and assigned to Arnaut Ayas."

The *timar* had been taken away from Mahmud from Vidin, because he had "sold a prisoner," while a certain Kuçuk Zaganos had been left without an income after the *sanjak-beg* reported that he had performed "immoral activities with his wife." A certain Umur lost his *timar* because the "infidels had complained." For the similar reasons, his *timar* was taken away from Orhan, son of Yusuf about whom his *reaya* had complained. It was also reported that he was a "drunkard" and "perpetually stealing from the qadi's man." The *timar* could also be taken away because of the illness of a tenant. The *sanjak-beg* Yakub had reported about a certain Hamza that his "legs and arms are sick (he has rheumatic disorder) and he is not ready to work," thus his *timar* was given to someone else.<sup>28</sup> There were also certain attempts to misuse the documents concerning the *timars* tenure. For example, in a note written by the register of the *timar* of Ali, son of Saruca and Iskender, son of Doğan, consisting of the villages Srednja Kruševica, Zladovac, and Bolja, the clerk had remarked: "The sanjak-beg reported that this Ali was not the son of Saruca and that he had not registered the haraj of the living infidels; thus the village Zladovac was taken from him and given to his cousin, Fani Asil-beg. In his place, according to the berat, his uncle Hizir should send to the campaign one eşkinci. The rest of the villages—there are two of them—should be confirmed to the above-mentioned Iskender."<sup>29</sup>



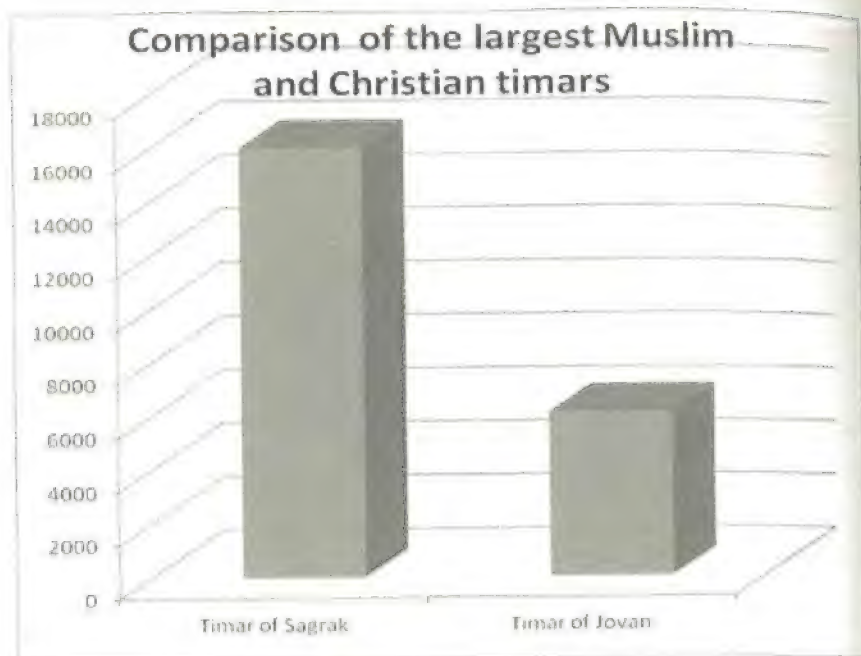


Figure 12.3

The notes also allow us to follow the intentions of the central government that wished to preserve the prescribed income of the *timar* holders. In cases in which certain changes had occurred on the field (i.e., that the *reaya* had fled, etc.), a possible loss was compensated for through the assignment of the income from some other settlement or part of the settlement. For example, along with the *timar* first assigned to Labli Şahin, who had died, it was remarked that it was given to Mahmud from Vidin and his son Isa. That *timar* consisted of two villages, Mirnica and Čukovac. In the meantime, the village Mirnica had been given to other *timar* holders, thus the above-mentioned Mahmud was given the village Ribar, in the region of Kruševac, and Gornje Dubovo in the region of Dubočica.<sup>30</sup> A similar example is seen in the case of Muraydi Balaban, who had been given a *timar* consisting of the village of Badnjevac and *mezraa* Dolovci. Since his *timar* fell apart, with the knowledge of sanjak-beg Sinan-beg, the village of Gornja Izkolina was given to him in compensation.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Musa, son of *kapıcı* Ismail, had been compensated for the income coming from the village of Hlebina, which had previously been a part of his *timar*. He was given instead the income of the village of Stubica in the region of Petrus as well as the *mezraa* Kratica. The reasons why the income of the village Hlebina was no longer a part of his *timar* were not mentioned.<sup>32</sup>

It is possible throughout the census book to follow the first notation of the conversion of the Serbian population to Islam. Muslim first names with a Serbian patronymic are mentioned several times: Suleiman, son of Bogdan, the blacksmith; Ağa, son of Aleksa; Yusuf *gûlam* of Isa-beg, son of Todor Muzak.<sup>33</sup> However, since this census book is a general one (*icmâl*), not a detailed one (*mufassal*), there is no precise information regarding the number of the *reaya* population that converted to the Islam, but bearing in mind the data from the *defters* from the later epochs,<sup>34</sup> when that number was still very low, and when the process of conversion was limited to the larger urban surroundings, it is reasonable to assume that the process of conversion to Islam in the regions of Kruševac, Toplica, and Dubočica in the mid-fifteenth century only involved a small portion of the Serbian noble families, who wished to preserve certain privileges within the Ottoman *timar* system.<sup>35</sup>

It can be concluded that the *timar* system in the southern parts of the former Serbian Empire began to take hold during the 1440s and 1450s. The system reached its complex form after the final conquest of Serbia and Bosnia, when Mehmed II the Conqueror, in order to improve his administration of the newly conquered lands, undertook comprehensive land reforms in his Empire, especially in its European provinces. The effects of those reforms are evident when the data from the Ottoman census book dating from the 1440s and 1450s is compared to the *defters* dating from the 1470s. However, because this chapter presents just a case study, a detailed analysis of all the preserved census books for the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire would be needed to provide more thorough conclusions.

## GLOSSARY

*Timar system*—grant of lands or revenues by the sultan to an individual in compensation for his services, essentially similar to the *iqṭāʿ* of the Islamic empire of the Caliphate.

*Timar*—land revenue that brings to its holder income up to 19,999 akches (Ottoman silver coins).

*Zeamet*—land revenue that brings to its holder income up to 99,999 akches.

*Hass*—land revenue that brings to its holder income higher than 100,000 akches.

*Mirri land*—the land that nominally belonged to the state (i.e., to the sultan). The holder had to have sultan's valid permission to hold it.

*Ushri land*—the land that has been conquered by the Muslims and then given to their warriors or other Muslims. As the revenue from this land, only the *ushur* (one tenth of the production) has been given to the poor ones; it was not given as the salary or revenue.



Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

When Isaac ascended the throne in September 1185 he was immediately faced with the Norman invasion of the Balkans; Dyrrachion and Thessalonike had already fallen and the Norman forces were marching unopposed towards Constantinople. The new emperor launched a massive counter-offensive which succeeded in swiftly expelling the invaders and subsequently negotiated an important alliance (or rather a renewal of the pre-existing alliance) with the Hungarians whereby he married the daughter of King Béla III, Margaret, and restored the *status quo ante* in the western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> The agreement not only secured peace in the empire's northwestern frontier, putting an end to Hungarian encroachment, but also resolved the question of Serbia, to which Béla formally renounced all claims.<sup>10</sup> The marriage, however, produced an unexpected result. Isaac had intended that the royal wedding be paid from the imperial estates, but demands were also made on Anchialos and other neighboring towns, provoking the local inhabitants to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when the emperor refused to enlist the local Vlach leaders, the brothers Theodore and Asen, in the imperial forces and grant them an estate producing a small income in the vicinity of the Haimos Mountains.<sup>12</sup> The two brothers enlisted the support of St. Demetrios to their cause in order to mobilize their compatriots and launched a full-scale rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Without opposition they extended their control over the regions outside the Haimos Mountains. Theodore assumed the name Peter, after Peter I who had ruled Bulgaria in the tenth century, and was crowned tsar. Having failed to capture Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, the rebels commenced their devastating raids.<sup>14</sup> Isaac responded with a series of counter-offensives in the following decade, but achieved limited success. The fighting seems to have mainly taken place in the regions extending from Sofia and Lovitzos (Loveč) to the west, to Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea in the east, and as far as Arkadiopolis in Thrace to the south.<sup>15</sup>

The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas

31. Zirojević and Eren, "Popis," p. 385.
32. Zirojević and Eren, "Popis," p. 387.
33. Zirojević and Eren, "Popis," pp. 388–9, 392, 400.
34. For more details, see: Vasić, Zirojević, and Stojanovski, "Popis niškog kadiluka iz 1498. godine"; M. Vasić, "Stanovništvo kruševačkog sandžaka i njegova društvena struktura u XVI vijeku," *Kruševac kroz vekove* (Kruševac, 1972), pp. 49–73.
35. M. Vasić, *Islamizacija na balkanskom poluostrvu* (Istočno Sarajevo, 2005); B. Đurđević, "Hrišćani-spahije u severnoj Srbiji u XV veku," *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine* 4 (Sarajevo, 1952), pp. 165–9; E. Miljković, "Hrišćani spahije u Smederevskom sandžaku u drugoj polovini 15. veka," in S. Mišić (ed.), *Moravska Srbija* (Kruševac, 2007), pp. 85–90.

## Chapter 13

# Memories of Home in the Accounts of the Balkan Refugees from the Ottomans to the Apennine Peninsula (Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)

Nada Zečević

Memories of home are notions deeply involved in the process of creating memory about human displacement.<sup>1</sup> On an individual level, these recollections can contain various emotional perspectives of the lost home or trauma associated with one's exile, or can even serve as imaginary homeland. On a collective level, they usually function as a *memoria*—a conscious elicitation of the past spread by one émigré group in order to keep its socio-cultural cohesion.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the notions of home recorded by émigrés<sup>3</sup> from the "Byzantine East"<sup>4</sup> during their settlement in the Apennines during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries frequently denoted discontent with the new status, designating it as an involuntary "exile," "this evil," "misery," and "calamitas" of the "destitute" (cf. Proverbs 31:8–9).<sup>5</sup> In most apparent instances, for their fate the émigrés blamed the Ottomans, reserving highest gratulatory expressions (*bona memoria et fama, memoria aeterna, in perpetuam memoriam, terra gloriosa*) for their Italian hosts.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the fact that this gratulatory discourse was done in Latin language, which at the time, was the "official power" language of the émigrés' new environments, suggests that these praises had one specific purpose—to gain an additional esteem or concrete help from their hosts. This assumption seems further supported by a number of "unofficial" situations in which the émigrés expressed more critical opinions about their hosts, usually describing them with common terms as mean, hypocritical, ungrateful for their services, or lacking in genuine culture.<sup>7</sup> In order to further examine the connection between these memories of home and their presentations, in this chapter I shall focus on the most important features of the émigré recollections' content and the most significant circumstances of their public use.<sup>8</sup>



Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

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accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

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The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas

administration,<sup>28</sup> or as reflecting the émigrés' concrete aspirations in it.<sup>29</sup> Thus, when the émigrés opted for respectable army positions or diplomatic and courtly careers in the administrations of their new suzerains, their titles significantly stressed the tradition or duration of the émigrés' service to the Byzantine rulers,<sup>30</sup> while the links with the Byzantine imperial military hierarchy were especially alleged by commoners and *stratiots* (mercenary soldiers from the Balkans), who offered to serve in arms their new suzerains.<sup>31</sup> Around the mid-sixteenth century, some *stratiots* were admitted to the Italian nobility—claiming the long tradition of serving in arms the Byzantine imperial power obviously proved an effective way of enhancing their social standing.<sup>32</sup>

Heraldic shields of some military—stratiotic—families, such as those of the Constantino (Constantini), Vassallo or Valentino of Sicily and Reggio Calabria, show that sometimes the claimed links did not even have to necessarily call upon the authentic Byzantine imperial tradition, but could also exploit the most basic associations with the Roman Empire in the East. Some of these families thus simply referred to a motto always connected with Emperor Constantine ("In hoc signo vinces") or just vaguely hinted at their previous orientations towards Byzantium (e.g., heraldic representations of lions turned in the direction of a star positioned in the East and representing Constantinople).<sup>33</sup>

Alleged positions in the Byzantine imperial or military apparatus were often reinforced by suggestive genealogical constructions.<sup>34</sup> Importantly, these constructions did not commemorate all émigrés' ancestors that had formatted their lineage "back home," but just those kinsmen who had significantly contributed to their family's alleged elevated status in the imperial system.<sup>35</sup> Just like other intentional devices of selective presentation, these lineages represented agnatic lines of ancestors, structured by the principle of primogeniture of male and legitimate offspring, whose personal ruling or military skills were highlighted in a superlative grade.<sup>36</sup> Usually, these lineages descended from Byzantine imperial dynasties or were linked with Constantinople as the key center of the imperial power.<sup>37</sup> Among the imperial dynasties the one most commonly chosen as a starting point for these lineage constructions was the Komnenoi, with whom the émigrés preferred to link themselves regardless of whether their true connection in blood had ever existed.<sup>38</sup> The noble émigrés' offspring born in Italy further modified this conception with the elements of the Humanist discourse, so the origins of their lineages typically went back to Homer's heroes, generals of the Augustinian Rome, leaders of the Great Migration (here, Langobards were quite popular as their power in southern Italy was seen as a "continuity" with the ancient Roman tradition), or most powerful early-Byzantine imperial figures (notably Emperors Constantine, Theodosius I, and Justinian) whose significance

in the consolidation of the Roman power was largely known.<sup>39</sup> Based on such allegations, by the sixteenth century the majority of the noble émigrés' offspring represented themselves as direct descendants of the "Emperors of Constantinople" ("*stripe imperiale di Constantinopoli*" or "*stripe regia*").<sup>40</sup>

In the Middle Ages, religion was one of the most important elements of any individual's identity. Thus it is of no wonder why the self-identifications of the Eastern new-comers to Italy frequently exploited the references to the rites of their ancestors. Some émigrés, most notably those from the coastal areas of Dalmatia and Eastern Adriatic, had already been Roman Catholic before they came to the Apennines, but the majority of migrants who came from Greece were of Orthodox Christian denomination. Initially, their settlement was followed by grants that allowed them to confess their ancestral faith with no major restrictions,<sup>41</sup> but this liberty was gradually limited, and almost totally banned after the Council of Trent (1545–1563) allowed radical suppressions of the Orthodox cult, its modifications (measures favoring the Roman Catholic idea of the Union), or ultimate conversions of worshipers to Catholicism.<sup>42</sup> In such situations, some émigrés attempted to preserve their ancestral religion by maintaining crypto-Orthodox liturgical practices, or by transferring the elements of their past tradition to their new denominations (most notable in family cults, patronage, baptism and burial practices).<sup>43</sup> Public declarations of their Orthodoxy gradually disappeared, but in some self-identifications remained behind the 'negotiated' émigrés' stress of their ancestors' participation in the defense of the entire Christianity.<sup>44</sup> Alternatively, when presenting themselves to the host public, the émigrés frequently quoted common invocations of Trinity, a variety of common Biblical places that confirmed the authentic apostolic Christianity of their places of origin, or the Biblical validation of their refugee positions. Among the most common themes employed in such presentations were those of the Old Testament that recalled the suffering and misery of exile: reminding the hosts of the biblical "sojourn" (cf. Deuteron. 6:10–12), that all things come from God and all people were transient on earth (cf. I Chronicle 29:14–15), or imploring God's grace for those who accommodate refugees' (cf. Hebrews 13:1–2). Leaving home to the Ottomans equaled also Abraham's departure (cf. Genesis 12:1), and plights to the Apennines were uniformly depicted as "unjust" (cf. Psalm 146).<sup>45</sup> To these notions, the second generation of the émigrés added the motive of sin due to "dogmatic errors" of their ancestors;<sup>46</sup> in some later accounts, this condemning notion was slightly alleviated in a way that the alleged ancestral dogmatic error was presented as an inevitable outcome of the Renaissance Fortuna.<sup>47</sup>

The memories of home that the émigrés from the Byzantine East projected in the Apennines were, obviously, individual recollections of their pasts. Some of these commemorative constructs were certainly highly selective



as they strategically aimed at reaching an Italian audience that was literate, well-educated, and close to the highest structures of the hosting powers. The attention of these circles certainly allowed the émigrés to “negotiate” their positions within the host societies in a way that allowed them to merge their home values with the new social expectations and thus attempt to improve a variety of favorable conditions in their new environments<sup>48</sup>—a stress on their real or claimed imperial alignment could easily enable useful marriage attachments to the local Italian nobility<sup>49</sup> while detailed references to their possessions “back home” were opportunities to improve the émigrés’ finances, just as the frequent mentions of their past services to the Byzantine Empire promised stable positions at the hosts’ courts and military troops.<sup>50</sup>

Memories of home by Eastern émigrés in the Apennines continued to exist among their offspring, born and educated in the new societies. The new generations too recollected their family pasts situationally, but in a different manner, usually presenting the homeland of their ancestors as an important formative space of the Classical Antiquity through which they could validate their new Italian identity. How Humanist “Italianization” of these memories exactly took place cannot be answered with precision because this discourse was commonly circulated and widely shared,<sup>51</sup> yet there is no doubt that during these processes individual recollections of the émigrés became the common *memoria*. Unlike memories of some other forced migrations that usually tended to preserve and maintain the émigrés’ collective recollection of their pasts, the *memoria* of home created and shaped by the offspring of the émigrés from the Byzantine East had a totally different aim—to affirm their new identities and further facilitate their full attachment to the new homes in the Apennine peninsula.

## NOTES

1. Nowadays, modern scholarship usually defines these memories as “diasporic.” More on this in Viaj Agnew (ed.), *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto, 2005); M. Chamberlain, “Diasporic Memories: Community, Individuality, and Creativity—A Life Stories Perspective,” *The Oral History Review* 36:2 (2009), pp. 177–87.

2. B. Tversky, “Remembering Spaces,” in E. Tulving and F. I. M. Craik (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Memory* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 363–78; J. W. Schooler and E. Eich, “Memory for Emotional Event,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Memory*, pp. 379–94; S. Küchler, “The Place of Memory,” in A. Forty and S. Küchler (eds.), *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford, 2001, second paperback edition, first edition 1999), pp. 53–72.

3. Sometimes, the terms that usually refer to the émigrés as having narrowly escaped the Ottomans reflected their own “negotiating” narratives, rather than the

real circumstances of their alleged plights. For instance, while Thomas Palaiologos, Bosnian Queen mother Catherine (b. c. 1425–1478), or their entourage can indeed be called “exiles” from the Ottomans (also, “profugi,” “fugati,” etc.), the “exile” of Queen Charlotte of Lusignan (1444–1487) was just a direct consequence of her dethronement by her half-brother.

4. By “Byzantine East” here I mean the area of the Balkan Peninsula and other regions that were directly affected by the Ottoman expansion in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and from where the majority of the émigrés to the Apennines originated. In socio-cultural political terms, this region represents a common space closely linked with the Byzantine Empire. Similarly, the use of the term “Italy” pertains here not so much to particular political entities, but, rather, to the geo-context of the Apennine peninsula or its cultural perception (“Italianità” as defined by Petrarch in the fourteenth century). The term “Apennines,” however, will be used here to designate both the geographical frames and the political contexts that operated in the peninsula or adjacent territories (namely, the Venetian administration in the Eastern Adriatic and Greece). Defining the émigrés’ ethnic backgrounds is even more complex. Upon their arrival to the Apennines, all émigrés settled in one area were most often designated by the locals through the places of their origin/leader of their most dominant group. Some hosts obviously did not fully comprehend the actual ethnic differences among various émigrés, hence in some accounts one can find ambiguous denominations such as “greci albanesi,” “Epirotae,” or the descriptions of “Albanians settled in Calabria who speak Serbian language and have Serbian rituals” (V. d’Avino, *Cenni storici sulle chiese arcivescovili, vescovili e prelatizie* (Napoli, 1848), pp. 139, 117, 159); C. Porzio, *L’istoria d’Italia nell’ 1547 e la descrizione del Regno di Napoli* (Napoli, 1849), p. 151 (considering the émigrés as Greeks). This ambiguity was further complicated by the Humanist denominations of the émigrés through the terms that appealed to the Classical Antiquity. Hence some émigrés were described as “Achai” (d’Avino, *Cenni storici*, p. 580), “Illyrians” (*Pii secundi Pontificis Maximi Commentarii*, eds. I. Bellus and I. Boronkai [Budapest, 1993], vol. 1, chapter II, 35, p. 127, ln. 10; ch. III, 3, p. 564, ln. 10; cf. XII, 16, p. 580, ln. 26 “Illyridem”; cf. II, 35, p. 143 “Rasciani,” “Croatini,” “Dalmatae”; III, 6, pp. 142–3 “Bosnenses,” XII, 16, 580, ln. 26 “Servientes”), or “Macedoni” (P. P. Rodota, *Dell’ origine, progresso e stato presente del rito Greco in Italia III* [Roma, 1763], pp. 3, 53).

5. For some examples of this terminology, see the self-presentations of Božidar Vuković in his introductions to the *Oktoich* book and the Celebration Meneion printed in Venice 1536–1539, as from *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi* (Old Serbian epigraphs and inscriptions), ed. M. Pavić (Belgrade, 1986), pp. 147–9; Carlo and Leonardo Tocco, in J. A. Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches historiques sur la Principauté française de Morée et ses hautes Baronnies*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1843), pp. 491–2; Constantine Lascaris, *Epistola ad Joannem Gatum Catanae Episcopum*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series Graeca*, vol. 161, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 161 (Paris, 1866), colls. 913–5; Bernardus Nerlius referring to Demetrios Chalcocondyles, in Konstantinos N. Sathas, (ed.), *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία: Βιογραφία ἰ τῶν ἐν γράμμασι διαλλαμνάντων Ἑλλήνων (1453–1821)* (Athens, 1868), p. 63; Epigram by Doukas Spandounes, in Sathas, *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία*, pp. 106–7; Giovanni Musachi, *Breve Memoria de li*



*Discendenti de nostra casu Musachi*, in K. Hopf (ed.), *Chroniques gréco-romaines inédites ou peu connues publiées avec notes et tables généalogiques* (Berlin, 1873, reprinted edition, Athens, 1961), p. 272.

6. A clear example of the situational use of these languages can be seen in the recollections by Tommaso Diplovatzio, *Memorie*, in K. N. Sathas, *Μνημεία Ἑλληνικῆς ιστορίας—Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge*, vol. IX (Paris, 1890), pp. XXXI–IV, where the basic narration was done in the Italian vernacular, but documentary references about the family's connection to the ruling powers were quoted in Latin. For examples of favorable hosts' expressions as referred by some émigré nobles, see Musachi, *Breve Memoria*, pp. 272–3. On this issue, also see the conclusions by W. Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: A History of Frankish Greece (1204–1566)* (New York, 1908), p. 487; F. Babinger, "Das Ende der Arianiten," in *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (München, 1960); J. Harris, *Greek émigrés in the West 1400–1520* (Camberley, 1995), pp. 62–84. For occasional cases of hostility shown to some émigrés, cf. D. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 416–8; J. Harris, "A Worthless Prince? Andreas Palaiologus in Rome," 1465–1502, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61 (1995), pp. 537–54. N. Bisaha, "Pope Pius II and the Crusade," in Norman Housley (ed.), *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 39–52, points out that the hosts' favor often pertained just to the émigré nobility, while on a lower social level there must have been a variety of negative stereotypes circulating about the newcomers and directly affecting them. The local population was especially ill-disposed towards Albanian migrants who were frequently qualified as "robbers" and "clandestines" (*latroni; vagantes*), for which reason their mobility was significantly restricted by their confinement to some specifically designated areas; see d'Avino, *Cenni storici*, pp. 580, 587–90.

7. Constantine Lascaris, *Letter to Juan Pardo in 1474*, in V. Labate, "Per la biografia de Costantino Lascari: nuovi documenti," *Archivio storico siciliano* 26 (1901), pp. 224–35; *Epistolae Quattuordecim familiares*, in Migne, PG 161, coll. 957; P. H. Boulboulidis, "Des epigrammes de Constantin Lascaris," *Byzantinoslavica* 26 (1965), pp. 291–4. These opinions of Lascaris are somewhat challenged by honorary terminology with which Ferdinand of Aragon addressed him in 1493, as from Labate, "Per la biografia," p. 233 (*nobili grecij Constantinopolitani; nobili misser constantino*); similarly, in L. Perroni Grande, "Per la storia di Messina e non per essa soltanto: appunti d'Archivio," *Archivio storico di Messina* 3 (1903), p. 272 (document of December 12, 1481). Also, Constantine was not always negative about his hosts, and he wrote about Sicily also in an affirmative manner, cf. his *Epistola ad Joannem Gatum*, in Migne, PG 161, colls. 913–5.

8. For the purposes of an initial consideration of this topic, in this chapter I shall refer only to the information of the published sources, while various pieces of unpublished material scattered through Italian and other European archives, still remain to be systematically explored. Also, it has to be pointed out that in some of its aspects this inquiry is limited to the records of the substantially literate, wealthy, and noble elite, while the perceptions of the indigenous émigrés will remain largely unknown due to the silence or comparative lack of the primary sources.

9. Among important historiography contributions on this topic, see W. Miller, "Balkan Exiles in Rome" in idem, *Essays on the Latin Orient* (Amsterdam, 1964, unchanged reprint from 1921), pp. 497–515; G. M. Monti, "La speditio in Puglia di Giorgio Castriota Scanderbeg," *Japigia* (new series) 10 (1939), pp. 298, 314–20; Harris, *Greek émigrés, passim*; Nicolae Iorga, "The Exiles," in *Byzantium after Byzantium*, introduction V. Candea (Oxford, 2000), pp. 31–56. Various contexts of some of these migrations were explored also in M. Balard and A. Ducellier (eds.), *Migrations et Diasporas Méditerranéennes (Xe–XVIIe siècles), Colloque international, Conques 14–17 octobre 1999*, (Paris, 2002).

10. For major émigré individuals and communities in the Apennines, among other works, see G. Tocci, *Memorie storiche—legali dei comuni albanesi di S. Giorgio, Vaccarico, S. Cosimo, S. Demetrio e Macchia* (Consenza, 1869); G. Guelfi Camajani, *Descrizione bibliografica: Cenni storici genealogici della famiglia Paleologo* (Livorno, 1911); F. Savorognan, "Le colonie albanesi in Italia," *Nuova Antologia* 74: 1613 (1939), pp. 313–6; D. Ambrasi, "In margine all'immigrazione greca nell'Italia meridionale nei secoli XV e XVI," *Asprenas* 7:2 (1961), pp. 156–85; V. Giura, "La comunità greca di Napoli (1534–1861)," in *Storia di minoranze: Ebrei, greci, albanesi nel regno di Napoli* (Napoli, 1984), pp. 123–4; S. Anselmi, *Italia felix: Migrazioni slave ed albanesi in occidente: Romagna, Marche, Abruzzi, secoli XIV–XVI* (Ancona, 1988); K. P. Matscke, "The Notaras Family and its Italian Connections," *Dunbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995), pp. 59–72; T. Ganchou, "Le rachat des Notaras après la chute de Constantinople, ou les relations 'étrangères' de l'élite byzantine au XVe siècle," in Balard and Ducellier (eds.), *Migrations et Diasporas Méditerranéennes*, pp. 215–335; B. Doumerc, "Les Vénitiens confrontés au retour des repatriés de l'empire colonial d'outre-mer (fin XVe–début XVIe siècle)," in Balard and Ducellier (eds.), *Migrations et Diasporas Méditerranéennes*, pp. 389–97; C. Maltezou, "Άννα Παλαιολογίνα Notarā: μιὰ τραγική μορφή ανάμεσα στον Βυζαντινό και τον νέο Έλληνικό κόσμο" (Venezia, 2004).

11. While the migrations of the Eastern rulers and nobility took place before or immediately after the Ottoman attacks on their lands, the migrations of the Greek intellectuals depended on a variety of other factors and represented a long process that can be chronologically followed throughout the entire fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The migrations of commoners (usually the stratiots) took place in several major stages, and seem to have been most intense c. 1439 (related to the Florentine Union); 1461–1470 (following the fall of Morea); 1470–1478 (Ottoman conquests in western Greece and Albania); 1533–34 (the fall of Coron). Importantly, the migration waves after 1453 represent just one stage among many other instances of human fluctuation and interactions that took place between the Apennines and the Balkans since the times of the ancient Magna Graecia, the immediate Byzantine rule there, or political interactions just prior to or during the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, so it should, by no means, be seen as an encounter of two distant or unknown worlds. More on these interactions, R. Weiss, "The Greek Culture of Southern Italy in the Later Middle Ages," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 37 (1951), pp. 23–50; D. J. Geanakoplos, *Interaction of Sibling Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance (330–1600)* (New Heaven and London, 1976); C. R. Zach, "Families

Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

When Isaac ascended the throne in September 1185 he was immediately faced with the Norman invasion of the Balkans; Dyrrachion and Thessalonike had already fallen and the Norman forces were marching unopposed towards Constantinople. The new emperor launched a massive counter-offensive which succeeded in swiftly expelling the invaders and subsequently negotiated an important alliance (or rather a renewal of the pre-existing alliance) with the Hungarians whereby he married the daughter of King Béla III, Margaret, and restored the *status quo ante* in the western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> The agreement not only secured peace in the empire's northwestern frontier, putting an end to Hungarian encroachment, but also resolved the question of Serbia, to which Béla formally renounced all claims.<sup>10</sup> The marriage, however, produced an unexpected result. Isaac had intended that the royal wedding be paid from the imperial estates, but demands were also made on Anchialos and other neighboring towns, provoking the local inhabitants to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when the emperor refused to enlist the local Vlach leaders, the brothers Theodore and Asen, in the imperial forces and grant them an estate producing a small income in the vicinity of the Haimos Mountains.<sup>12</sup> The two brothers enlisted the support of St. Demetrios to their cause in order to mobilize their compatriots and launched a full-scale rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Without opposition they extended their control over the regions outside the Haimos Mountains. Theodore assumed the name Peter, after Peter I who had ruled Bulgaria in the tenth century, and was crowned tsar. Having failed to capture Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, the rebels commenced their devastating raids.<sup>14</sup> Isaac responded with a series of counter-offensives in the following decade, but achieved limited success. The fighting seems to have mainly taken place in the regions extending from Sofia and Lovitzos (Loveč) to the west, to Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea in the east, and as far as Arkadiopolis in Thrace to the south.<sup>15</sup>

The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas



[. . .]; the epitaph of Thomas Demetrios Asanes Palaiologos (church S. Giovanni Maggiore in Naples), in Domenico Ambrasi, "In margine dell'immigrazione greca," p. 156. Cf. Miller, *The Latins*, p. 406; N. Zečević, "Searching for Acceptance: A Fifteenth-Century Refugee's History," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 6 (2000), pp. 129–43.

23. Spandugnano, *De la origine*, pp. 139 and 144; the epitaph by Janus Lascaris, in Forcella, *Iscrizioni*, vol. 10, no. 572, p. 348.

24. E.g., one of Bessarion's epitaphs (Graecia me genuit, fovit Italis ora, galero/Roma colit; vita sum Numa, et arte Plato), as from Sathas, *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία*, p. 32; for an epitombion to Gazas by Politiano ('Ελλάς γὰρ τέκε τὸν γ' Αὐσονίη >δ' ἔτρεφεν), *ibid.*, p. 39; George of Trebizond to Guarino Veronese, in Sathas, *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία*, p. 43, n. 2 ([. . .] *ne me in Graecia ortum, sed Romae, nec his temporibus, sed Ciceronis aetate praedicares*).

25. J. Monfassani, "In praise of Ognibene and blame of Guarino: Andronicus Contoblacas' invective against Niccolo Botano and the citizens of Brescia," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 52 (1990), pp. 309–21 (reprinted in *idem, Byzantine Scholars in Italy*, no. XI). This perception was particularly commemorated on epitaphs, e.g., that of John Argyropoulos or Artidorom Joppol ("the captain of the 'Greek nation'"), or the epitaph of Belisarius Corentius, famous Neapolitan artist of Greek origin, dated to 1615 (ex antique Arcadum genere [. . .] nobilis Arcas erat alter vere protogenes incola Partenopes); Epitaph created for Marcus Musurus ([. . .] Regna latina petunt et erat Musurus in illis/ Hospicio ictuntur hospitis ante sui/ Nunc etiam bustum, grata pietate sepulti/Officii quamvis sedulitate colunt), as from Sathas, *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία*, p. 84.

26. Judging from the reflections of their self-presentations, the stratiots usually tended to connect their military positions in Italy with their past military service, thus giving an impression that they had already been established in the higher military circles of their homeland. See Sathas, *Μνήμεία*, vol. IX, f. 3, no. DXXI (1548, June 9). Memory of Carlo and Leonardo Tocco to the Vice-King of Naples, (1490), in Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches*, vol. 1, p. 491.

27. E.g., the Memory of Carlo and Leonardo Tocco to the Vice-King of Naples (1490), in Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches* 1, p. 491.

28. E.g., Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, pp. 294–5 (*E quando troverete Dispoto, sappiate che vol dire Principe*); pp. 278–80 for his use of the title of Sebastocrator (*Sebaston Crator* [. . .] *vuol dire Capitano generale del Imperadore* and further elaborations on p. 279); Giovanni's son Constantine also added his own perceptions of the title of Despot in Musachi, *Breve memoria*, pp. 308–13. On the situational use of the title of Despot among the Tocco family, see Jacobus Gherardi da Volterra, *Il diario Romano*, in E. Carusi (ed.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 23: 3a (new series) (Città di Castello, 1904), p. 12, ad annum 1480; Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches*, vol. 1, p. 491. Cf. Forcella, *Iscrizioni*, vol. 2, no. 39, p. 13, an epitaph of Giovanni Tocco in the church of St. Maria Nuova in Rome (1511): "TOANNES. TOCHO. SER.mo. DNO. ARTHE. DESPOTO. [. . .]." More on self-proclaimed Despots of the sixteenth century (including Hungarian and local usages), see Sima Ćirković, "Postvizantijski despoti," *Zbornik radova vizantološkog instituta* 38 (1999–2000), pp. 399–401.

29. Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches*, vol. 1, pp. 491–2.

30. G. Reccho, *Notizie di famiglie nobili, ed illustri della Città, e Regno di Napoli* (Napoli, 1717), p. 50, noted that the Tocco repatriates born in Italy succeeded to enter the royal *Anticamera de' Titoli in Palazzo* only during the second generation born in Italy (mid-sixteenth century). For the military and diplomatic careers of the Tocco repatriates born in Italy, Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches*, vol. 2, p. 328; Miller, *The Latins*, p. 488. On diplomatic service of "Constantino Comneno duca di Acaja e Macedonia" at the pontifical court and the court of Emperor Maximilian I (1493–1519); Franz Miklošić, "Marija kći Angjelinina i Konstantin Arijanit," *Rad Jugoslavenske Akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 12 (1870), p. 3; V. Giura, "Note sugli albanesi d'Italia nel mezzogiorno," *Società italiana di Demografia Storica* (2008), p. 4 (at [http://sides.uniud.it/\\_l\\_files/sides/papers/4\\_Giura.pdf](http://sides.uniud.it/_l_files/sides/papers/4_Giura.pdf) March 26, 2013). Among the commoner émigrés who reached significant army positions and noble status upon their migration to Italy, one can find a Demetrio Lecca of Naples (mentioned in 1798), whose men served in the Macedonian regiment of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, as from A. Leh, *Cenno storico dei servigi militari prestati nel Regno delle Due Sicilie dai Greci Epiroti Albanesi e Macedoni in epoche diverse* (Corfu, 1843), p. 98; a signor Attanasio Glichi di nazione Epirota, domiciliato e proprietario di beni fondi in Napoli and a Conte Strati-Gicca, potente signore [. . .] *Egli medesimo condusse quella gente, e l'accompagnò* [the bataglion of the "Macedonians," NZ] *nella piazza di Capua* [. . .], as from Leh, *Cenno storico*, pp. 15–6; or the *rinomati* Pieri, Garzoni, Andruzzi, Spiro, Lecca, Girardi, Nina, De Micheli, Blasi, Baninch as from Leh, *Cenno storico*, p. 18.

31. For an example of the intentional use of the title of Despot by Božidar Vuković and its later interpretation by his son Vincenzo, see Ćirković, "Despots," p. 398, notes 10 and 12.

32. Cf. P. Petta, *Despots d'Epiro e principi di Macedonia: Esuli albanesi nell'Italia del Risorgimento* (Lecce, 2000). To Zach ("Familles nobles Italiennes," p. 21), the advancement of some individuals was a consequence of their conversion to Catholicism.

33. For the heraldic shield of the Vassallo family that reflected their claim for lineage with the Byzantine imperial family, see an online excerpt from A. Mango di Casalgerardo, *Nobiliario di Sicilia: Notizie e stemmi relative alla famiglie nobili siciliane*, vol. 2 (Napoli, 1915), p. 282, at [www.regione.sicilia.it/beniculturali/biblioteca/central/mango/valle.htm](http://www.regione.sicilia.it/beniculturali/biblioteca/central/mango/valle.htm), March 25, 2013. For the claims by the Valentino family of Reggio Calabria to ancestral lineage to Constantinople (today still circulated within the family), see [www.ilportaledelsud.org/greco-albanesi\\_2.htm](http://www.ilportaledelsud.org/greco-albanesi_2.htm), March 25, 2013, under Valentino. For the claims by the Contantino (Constantini) of Palermo, see V. Spredi, *Enciclopedia Storico-Nobiliare Italiana: famiglie nobile e titolate viventi riconosciute del R. Governo d'Italia* (Milano, 1929), vol. II, p. 564. For the inscription of these families to the Italian nobility during a period prior to the Unification, see *Annuario della nobiltà italiana*, ed. Andre Borella, n. serie, edizione XXXI, S.A.G.I., vol. IV, pt. V, nos. 175, 19290, 19291, 19164 (for Alati, Vassallo, Valentino).

34. For an introduction to some interpretation models, see G. M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography," in *eadem, The Past*



as Text: *The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore–London, 1997), pp. 101–3; G. Althoff, J. Fried, and P. J. Geary (eds.), *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography* (New York, 2000); M. Brunn and J. Glaser (eds.), *Negotiating Heritage: Memories of the Middle Ages*, (Turnhout, 2009).

35. Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, pp. 281, 299, attempting to connect himself with various significant figures of the medieval Balkans (Skenderbey, St. Sava of the Serbian Nemanjić family, etc.), regardless of whether these connections were indeed true. For his connection to Skenderbey as claimed by Albanian émigrés, see Rodota, *Dell' origine*, III, p. 27 (*prole della linea mascolina del invito Scender-beg [...] della felice memoria [...]*).

36. A selective use of the past can also be seen from the name-giving patterns of the exiles' children born in the Apennines regardless of their previous local patterns. At first sight, one might conclude that these patterns commemorated the important persons from the families' "Greek" past because most of the names were Greek. However, a closer look reveals that these names expressed the Humanist preferences of the Homeric characters and classical Greek mythology quoted in their Latinized forms (e.g., Ettore, Polyxena, Dejanaira, Andronica, Pentesilea); see the genealogies of the Musachi, Tocco, and Arianiti in Hopf, *Chroniques*, pp. 530, 534–5; Miklošić, "Marija Angelina," p. 5.

37. For some examples of the émigrés' alleged connections to the Byzantine imperial families (usually, through a distant obscure line), see Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, pp. 275, 294–5 (Komnenoi and Angeloi), but also in the form of a general reference, p. 278 (*dicono la nostra progenie procede dalla città de Constantinopoli*); Spandugino, *De la origine deli Imperatori Ottomani*, pp. 138, 157–9, who calls himself "*patritio Constantinopolitano*." Rodota, *Dell' origine*, III, p. 99, for the nobility claims of Makarios Melissenos and his brother. An epitaph of Alfonso Maniquez (1621) in the church of Patri riformati di Santa Maria di Gesù nelle campagne di Palermo, as from Tsitseles, *Κεφαλληνιακά σύμμικτα*, Vol. 1. Athens, 1904, p. 110, attesting to the Tocco "royal" (apparently, Byzantine imperial) connections: *Eram de sanguine Ream/Cui genus et patria Bethica terra tulit./Carus ego Mariae Tocco de Stemmal Graium/Cui genus a quo idem sanguinis extat honor*. Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches*, Vol 1, pp. 491–2 (memory relation to Vice-King of Naples, 1490). Epitaph on the tomb of Constantine Castrioti in the convent of Santa Maria la Nova church in Naples as from a photo at [www.nobili-napoletani.it/Castriota.htm](http://www.nobili-napoletani.it/Castriota.htm), March 25, 2013: *CONSTANTINVS CASTRAYOTUS HIC/TEGITVR SANGVINE ET CONGNATIONE/REGIA AC CAESAREA CLARVS [...]*; cf. the epitaph's reading proposed by A. Di Sena, *S. Maria la Nova a Napoli: fondazione e trasformazioni del complesso conventuale (secoli XIII–XX)*, PhD thesis defended at the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Facoltà di Architettura (Napoli, 2005), no pagination ([www.fedoa.unina.it/2561/1/Di\\_Sena\\_Storia\\_dell\\_Architettura\\_e\\_della\\_Citta.pdf](http://www.fedoa.unina.it/2561/1/Di_Sena_Storia_dell_Architettura_e_della_Citta.pdf), March 25, 2013): *COSTANTINUS CASTRIOTUS HIC TEGITUR SANGVINE ET COGNATIONE/AC CESAREA [...]*. Cf. G. Rocco, *Il convento e la chiesa di S. Maria la Nova di Napoli nella storia e nell'arte* (Napoli, 1928), pp. 280–3.

38. For some examples, see the epitaph of Theodolinda Polissena Erina Baffa, in the church of Santa Sofia d'Epiro (n. 14. V 1555–December 25, 1593), as from

Nobili Napoletani, at [www.nobili-napoletani.it/Baffa-Trasci.htm](http://www.nobili-napoletani.it/Baffa-Trasci.htm), March 25, 2013): *D.O.M./IN PERPETUAM MEMORIAM/THEODOLINDAE ERINAE/TRASCI/DE GEORGI ET IPOITA BECCI/UXORQUE STEFANI BAFFA/HERES NOBILISSIMAE STIRPIS/MALIDAE/ILLUSTRISSIMAEQUE GENTIS/COMNENII/REGIO SANGVINE/THESSALONICAE FUIT/ANNO AETATIS SUAE XXXVIII/PERIIT A.D. MDXCIII*. Also, the epitaph of Giovanni Musachi, as from a reference by his son Constantine, in Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, p. 314 (*sanguine e cognatione Regia, ex urbe Bizantis oriundo, suis finibus Turcarum tyrannide eiecto*); Memory of Carlo and Leonardo Tocco to the Vice-King of Naples, (1490), in Buchon, *Nouvelles recherches*, vol. 1, p. 491 (connecting themselves to the dynasties of "Servia" and Paleologoi, whom with they were indeed aligned, but also to the Komnenoi who were not their immediate relatives); De Busac, pp. 70–3, for his link with the Komnenoi. For an example of the continuation of similar claims in some later epochs, see Mango di Casalgerardo, *Nobiliario di Sicilia*, vol. 2, p. 282 (on the Vassallo family of Palermo, who alleged, as it seems more intensively since the nineteenth century, their link with the Palaiologoi). For a general insight into these claims, see F. Rodriguez, *Le famiglie porfirogenite* (Napoli, 1933).

39. For various legendary layers of the Musachi genealogy, cf. Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, pp. 302–4, 308, 312 (the account of his son Constantine), influenced by the Humanists, hence connecting his ancestors to Rome of Numa Pompilius and Augustus, "spanning" this epoch with the Byzantine lineage and a reference to Emperor Constantine, and further, with all significant rulers of the medieval Balkans. For the Tocco hint to their origin from the Goths, see an epitaph on the grave of Ferdinand Tocco by Constantine Lascaris in Madrid (1535): *REGES TOCCORUM MIGRAVIMUS IN AUSONIAM TERRAM, QUANDO GETARUM MARS FUREBAT IN ITALIA*. In his epigrams, Janus Lascaris connected his alleged imperial origin with the Antiquity, or the heroic ancestry of the Homeric epics, see Sathas, *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία*, pp. 113–6.

40. Musachi, *Breve memoria*, p. 314, quoting an epitaph of Giovanni Musachi in the church of *Francavilla in terra di Otranto* (1510): *ex urbe Bizantis oriundi bicipitem aquillam habentis insigne coronatam*. G. Conforti, *Il Patriciato Greco* (Napoli, 1919). For the claims about the imperial connection (expressed in their heraldry by an image of a double-headed eagle) by several Greek families settled on Cephalonia and mentioned by the Venetians as noble in the sixteenth century (Foca, Loverdo, Marchetti, Melissino, Schiadan, Valsamaschi), see E. Rizo Rangabè, *Livre d'or de la noblesse ionienne*, vol. II (Athens, 1926); also, see N. K. Fokas, *Το κάστρο Αγ. Γεωργίου Κεφαλληνίας: η παλαιά πρωτεύουσα της νήσου* (Athens, 1966), p. 52, n. 49, quoting a sixteenth-century Venetian inscription at the entrance of St. George castle of Cephalonia with some of these names also mentioned there as noble. Cf. *Repertorio genealogico delle famiglie confermate nobili e dei titolati nobili esistenti nelle provincie venete*, ed. F. Schroeder (Venezia, 1830–1831), 2 vols. For the Alati, Vassallo, Valentino inscribed as having already been nobles in Italy of the pre-Unitary period, see *Annuario della nobiltà italiana*, ed. Andre Borella, n. serie, edizione XXXI, S.A.G.I., vol. IV, pt. V, nos. 175, 19290, 19291, 19164.



41. As it is widely known, the majority of the exiled rulers in the Apennines were Catholic or, at least, formally supported the Union. Another circle of predominantly Catholic émigrés were the repatriating Italian nobles.

42. Rodota, *Dell'origine*, III, pp. 11–37, 60–146, 235; V. G. Meola, *Delle Istorie della chiesa greca in Napoli esistente* (Napoli, 1790), p. 100. Cf. L. Allacci, *De aetate et interstitiis in collatione Ordinum apud Grecos servandis* (Roma, 1638), pp. 5–14, and F. P. Ruggiero, *Intorno al diritto dei Greci cattolici di rivendicare la parrocchia greca di Napoli* (Napoli, 1870). Also see, d'Avino, *Cenni storici*, pp. 461, 587–90; J. de Gay, "Notes sur la consecration du rite grec dans la Calabre et dans la terre d'Otrante au XIVe siècle," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 4 (1895), pp. 59–66; C. Korolevskij, "Le vicende ecclesiastiche dei paesi Italo-albanesi della Bailicata e della Calabria, I (Barile)," *Archivio storico per la Calabria e Lucania* I (1931), pp. 43–68; idem, "Le vicende ecclesiastiche dei paesi Italo-albanesi della Bailicata e della Calabria, II (Plataci)," in *Archivio storico per la Calabria e Lucania* IV (1934), pp. 207–17; V. Peri, *Chiesa romana e "rito" greco*, G. A. Santoro e la Congregazione dei Greci, 1566–1596 (Brescia, 1975); Zach, "Familles nobles Italiennes," p. 21; G. Veneziano, "Contrasti confessionali ed ecclesiastici tra Albanesi greco-ortodossi o cattolici e cattolici latini in Calabria e Lucania (dalle origini delle colonie al 1919)," *Archivio storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 36 (1968), pp. 89–115; F. Altimari, *Le minoranze linguistiche albanesi in Italia: profile storicoletterari, antropologici e giuridico-istituzionali*, in F. Altimari, M. Bolognari, and P. Carrozza (eds.), *L'esilio della parola* (Pisa, 1986), p. 5; A. Vaccaro, "Riflessi di cultura religiosa bizantina nel mezzogiorno d'Italia: il caso degli Albanesi (secoli XV–XVI)," *Archivio storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 72 (2005), pp. 83–137.

43. For the limitations of the Venetian conditions to the confession of the Orthodox rite to Anna Notara (June 18, 1475; September 27, 1480; May 26 1487), see Sathas, *Μνημεία*, vol. IX, pp. XXXVII, XXXVIII–XL; for some other similar cases of commoners' practices, see d'Avino, *Cenni storici*, pp. 68, 159, 161, 359, 461, 580, 587–90.

44. Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, p. 299. In their accounts, the émigrés tended to connect themselves with the most popular figures engaged in the resistance to the Ottomans; among the most prominent ones were Skenderbey, János Hunyadi, and Stephen the Great of Moldavia (all were entitled *athleta Christi* by the pontifical Curia), so it is of no wonder why many émigrés tended to associate their pasts with them.

45. Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, p. 272; da Volterra, *Il diario Romano*, ad ann. 1480, p. 12. Constantine Lascaris, in Migne, PG 161, colls. 913–5.

46. Bessarion, *Απόκρισις πρὸς τὰ τοῦ Ἑρέσου κεφάλαια*, in Migne, PG 161, colls. 138–9; *Ἐπιστολὴ ἡ καθολικὴ ἡ*, in Migne, PG 161, colls. 454–5. In the same context, Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, p. 300. Cf. Spandugino, *De la origine deli Imperatori Ottomani*, ed. Sathas, p. 172.

47. I. D. McFarlane, "The Renaissance Epitaph," *The Modern Language Review* 81:4 (1986), pp. xxv–xxxv.

48. J. G. Ball, "Poverty, Charity, and the Greek Community," *Studi Veneziani* (new series) 6 (1982), pp. 129–60, Monfassani, *Byzantine Scholars*, p. 54; Harris,

*Greek émigrés*, pp. 9–39; Petta, *Despoti d'Epiro e principi di Macedonia*, pp. 7–8, 151. Some evidence which Giura, "Note sugli albanesi d'Italia," p. 3, retrieved shows that the situation was more or less similar for the Albanian soldiers whom the vice-royal decrees strictly limited from freely circulating to the spaces where they could not be controlled in order to prevent them from robbing. K. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1978, reprint 1997), pp. 138–61; V. Giura, "La vita economica degli Albanesi in Calabria nei sec. XV–XVIII," in C. Rotelli (ed.), *Gli Albanesi di Calabria*, vol. I (Cosenza, 1990). References about the émigrés' bad finances (e.g., Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria*, p. 272), put together with the fact that the major number of the Balkan émigrés of the first generation was surrounded by their compatriots in Naples or Venice, challenge the opinion of Zach ("Familles nobles Italiennes," p. 22), who does not accept that there was a major decline of the émigrés' social status upon their settlement.

49. Musachi, *Breve memoria*, p. 288. Y. Ascher, "Renaissance commemoration in Naples: The Rota Chapel in San Pietro a Maiella," *Renaissance Studies* 14:2 (2000), pp. 190–209; idem, "Politics and Commemoration in Renaissance Naples: the case of Caterina Pignatelli," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 69:2 (2006), pp. 145–68.

50. For some examples of the connections with the local nobility (not necessarily of the highest rank), see De Busac, p. 73; Giovanni Musachi, *Breve memoria* (the part written by Constantine Musachi), p. 304; Hopf, *Chroniques*, pp. 530, 534–5 (genealogies of the Tocco, Musachi, Arianiti are partly inaccurate, but still reflect well these families' marriage mutual connections during their settlement in Italy).

51. Sathas, *Νεοελληνική φιλολογία*, *passim*; Geanakoplos, Constantinople, *passim* on various personal connections between the émigrés. Their connections and circulation of memory (especially of their personal memory annotations) are also confirmed by Giovanni Musachi, *Breve Memoria*, p. 297, and annotations of his son Constantine, pp. 304, 308, 315–35. For an example of a theme shared in the recollection of a few individual émigrés, see G. M. Monti, "Una leggendaria principessa Angioina moglie di un dinasta Albanese," in idem, *Nuovi Studi Angioini* (Trani, 1937), pp. 587–91. For the stratotic songs that shared some of the discourse about the hardship of their "exile," see Sathas, *Μνημεία*, vol. VII (Paris, 1888), pp. 188, 218–9, 223–7.

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Yet shortly after the death of Manuel in 1180 Byzantine authority in the northern Balkans was seriously challenged by the resurgence of Hungary and the emergence of autonomous polities in Serbia and Bulgaria. By 1182 Béla III of Hungary had annexed Dalmatia and Sirmium. The usurpation of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5) sparked a raiding campaign in the region of Niš-Braničevo extending from Belgrade to Sofia. The Hungarians presumably withdrew from any territories they may have occupied in this region following the conclusion of an alliance with Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) but are said to have retained Dalmatia and Sirmium, which had formed Béla's patrimony.<sup>4</sup> Stefan Nemanja of Serbia, whose forces had participated along with the Hungarians in the raiding campaign of 1182–3, took the opportunity to expand his own domains in the following years. He first conquered Kosovo and Metohija; subsequently he occupied the city of Niš and its surrounding region; acquired Duklja (Zeta) and the string of territories along the southern Adriatic coastline, and penetrated into northern Macedonia, taking Skopje and the upper Vardar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, beginning in late 1185, the Vlach-Bulgarian insurrection wreaked havoc on the Byzantine lands adjacent to the Haimos Mountains (Stara Planina), Macedonia, and central Thrace, eventually leading to the establishment of the "Second Bulgarian Empire," which was formally recognized by Byzantium most probably in 1202.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain this extraordinary reversal, modern scholars have often looked to the weakness of the central government, the internal power struggles, and the regional separatism, which characterize the period under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Inevitably, however, Byzantium's retreating Balkan frontiers and the rise of autonomous polities in the later twelfth century has been viewed, consciously or unconsciously, through the prism of the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. In this context, the fate of the Byzantine Balkans is taken to reflect a state of progressive internal disintegration that undermined imperial authority in the periphery, encouraged regional separatism, and invited foreign intervention. This may appear to be the case when we apply a holistic and long-term approach to the period in question, but can perhaps be challenged if we examine regional and short-term developments in isolation, and at the same time, refrain from viewing the capture of Constantinople as the culmination of a period of internal decline. In what follows, I will briefly re-examine the political developments in Byzantium's northern Balkan territories during the reigns of Isaac II and his successor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) in order to reconsider the collapse of the Byzantine position in this important region in the final decades of the twelfth century. Although there is now a wealth of scholarly literature on the northern Balkans in this period, it has not yet affected the standard perceptions and evaluations of the Angeloi, whose policies are viewed as mediocre at best and disastrous at worst.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, it is obvious that the political turmoil that

accompanied the death of Manuel Komnenos provided the pretext as well as the opportunity for various regional rulers in the northern Balkans to assert their independence and extend their authority at the expense of the empire. But we need to consider why this trend persisted after the accession of Isaac II to the throne in 1185. We also need to examine how Isaac II and Alexios III dealt with the disturbances in the northern Balkans and assess their respective policies within the chronological and temporal limits of the reigns.

When Isaac ascended the throne in September 1185 he was immediately faced with the Norman invasion of the Balkans; Dyrrachion and Thessalonike had already fallen and the Norman forces were marching unopposed towards Constantinople. The new emperor launched a massive counter-offensive which succeeded in swiftly expelling the invaders and subsequently negotiated an important alliance (or rather a renewal of the pre-existing alliance) with the Hungarians whereby he married the daughter of King Béla III, Margaret, and restored the *status quo ante* in the western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> The agreement not only secured peace in the empire's northwestern frontier, putting an end to Hungarian encroachment, but also resolved the question of Serbia, to which Béla formally renounced all claims.<sup>10</sup> The marriage, however, produced an unexpected result. Isaac had intended that the royal wedding be paid from the imperial estates, but demands were also made on Anchialos and other neighboring towns, provoking the local inhabitants to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The situation was further aggravated when the emperor refused to enlist the local Vlach leaders, the brothers Theodore and Asen, in the imperial forces and grant them an estate producing a small income in the vicinity of the Haimos Mountains.<sup>12</sup> The two brothers enlisted the support of St. Demetrios to their cause in order to mobilize their compatriots and launched a full-scale rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Without opposition they extended their control over the regions outside the Haimos Mountains. Theodore assumed the name Peter, after Peter I who had ruled Bulgaria in the tenth century, and was crowned tsar. Having failed to capture Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, the rebels commenced their devastating raids.<sup>14</sup> Isaac responded with a series of counter-offensives in the following decade, but achieved limited success. The fighting seems to have mainly taken place in the regions extending from Sofia and Lovitzos (Loveč) to the west, to Anchialos and Varna on the Black Sea in the east, and as far as Arkadiopolis in Thrace to the south.<sup>15</sup>

The events of the struggle need not be recounted here. However, I would like to draw attention to several points of interest. With regards to the origins of the rebellion, Isaac has often received the bulk of the blame. More specifically, the emperor is said to have exercised poor judgment when he made extraordinary demands on the inhabitants of the Haimos Mountains and subsequently denied the modest requests of their local leaders, thus turning regional disaffection into ethnic separatism.<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Niketas

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